

Two Palestinian fishermen wounded by Israeli patrol boat

KHAN YUNIS (AFP) — Two Palestinian fishermen were wounded, one seriously, when an Israeli navy gunboat opened fire on their vessel off the coast of the Gaza Strip on Saturday. Palestinian sources said. A member of the Palestinian liaison committee with Israel said the shooting occurred around 7:00 a.m. off the coast of the southern Gaza Strip. The two wounded Palestinian fishermen were admitted to the Nasser Hospital in this town in the southern Gaza Strip. One was in serious condition. The Palestinian official said the fishing boat was in waters under the control of the Palestinian National Authority when the Israeli patrol boat suddenly opened fire. Israeli military sources said the patrol boat had stopped a number of Palestinian vessels in a prohibited area for identity checks and opened fire when one of them tried to flee.

Jordan Times

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Happy Easter

THE JORDAN TIMES will not be published on Monday in celebration of Easter on Sunday, April 11. The next issue will appear on April 13. The Editor and staff of the Jordan Times wish readers and advertisers a very happy Easter.

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Monarch begins tour of Arab states

King, Sultan Qaboos hold talks on Jordan-Oman ties, regional issues

By Caroline Faraj
with Agencies

AMMAN — His Majesty King Abdullah arrived Saturday in Oman as part of a tour of Arab states aimed at bolstering ties with countries in the region, a government official said.

King Abdullah is expected to head to the United Arab Emirates on Sunday for talks with Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahyan, the official told the Jordan Times.

During his first stop on the Gulf tour, King Abdullah held talks with Sultan Qaboos of Oman on issues of mutual concern, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said.

"The two leaders reviewed Jordanian-Omani relations and means of enhancing cooperation between the two Arab states in all fields," Petra added.

The talks took place in an encampment of tents near the town of Nizwa, 170 kilometres southwest of Muscat, where Sultan Qaboos holds meetings when in the region, the Omani News Agency said.

King Abdullah, who expressed his deep appreciation for the continued support of the sultan and his government to the Kingdom, stressed the importance of "increasing cooperation and strengthening bilateral ties which are based on mutual respect."

They also reviewed Arab and regional issues, particularly the current situation of the stalled Arab-Israeli peace process.

"The two leaders stressed the importance of intensifying all efforts needed to provide utmost support to enable the Palestinians to secure their legitimate rights and establish

their independent state on their national soil," the Omani agency added.

King Abdullah and Sultan Qaboos also discussed the situation in Iraq and called for alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people and safeguarding the country's unity.

The two leaders reviewed the latest developments in Balkans and the suffering of the people of Kosovo as a result of the crisis in Yugoslavia and the displacement of the Kosovars. They expressed their deep concern and said that the present situation could have consequences on the security and the stability of the region as well as the world.

King Abdullah is accompanied by Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti, Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khafu, General Intelligence Department Director Samih Batikhi, other officials and members of the Royal family.

King Abdullah's visits are part of an itinerary of visits to Arab countries that took him to Saudi Arabia last week.

Following the death of King Hussein on Feb. 7, several countries, including the Gulf states, said they were ready to help the Kingdom meet upcoming challenges.

In an interview published Saturday in the London-based Al Quds Al Arabi, King Abdullah said his visit to the Gulf was not to seek donations but rather "real economic cooperation" that includes opening markets to Jordanian workers and products.

The King said his priorities are to improve ties with Arab countries and implement eco-



His Majesty King Abdullah meets with Sultan Qaboos upon his arrival in Oman on Saturday (Petra photo)

nomics to help solve Jordan's pressing problems of poverty, unemployment and economic recession.

"Economic relations will top the Jordanian agenda in all the talks that King Abdullah is expected to hold during his Arab and foreign tours," said the official.

Jordan, also grappling with a \$6.8 billion foreign debt, hopes the Gulf Arab states will employ more Jordanians to ease unemployment officially estimated at 16 per cent and unofficially at up to 27 per cent.

However, many officials fear that Jordan's educational system will be unable to turn out the specialists needed to meet the Gulf countries' needs.

"Hence, our educational system is in dire need for reform

to meet future needs and challenges," said one government official.

"We are hopeful that the outcome of the King's tour will succeed in promoting economic ties with both the governments and the private sectors in the Gulf and Arab states," said the official.

Jordan's ties with the Gulf states deteriorated after the Gulf crisis of 1990-91, and those with Syria chilled after the peace treaty with Israel was concluded in 1994.

But officials have repeatedly stressed that enhanced ties with either the Arab states or Israel would not be at the expense of relations with other countries.

"The peace [with Israel] has already been concluded... there is no going back on it," said

another senior official on condition of anonymity.

In the Al Quds Al Arabi interview, King Abdullah stressed that "relations with Israel will not at all be at the expense of ties with Arabs, especially with Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Palestine."

Later this month, King Abdullah is expected to visit Libya, Syria, Egypt and other Arab countries before heading to Washington in mid-May for his first official trip to the United States.

Meanwhile officials have expressed their optimism over future economic relations with the UAE and Libya.

"Jordan believes that Libya and the UAE have the most stable economies in the Arab World," a senior official said.

Crown Prince, officials discuss King's visit to Saudi Arabia

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hamzah, the Regent, on Saturday held talks at the Prime Ministry with senior officials on His Majesty King Abdullah's recent visit to Saudi Arabia.

During the meeting, Prince Hamzah was briefed by acting Prime Minister Marwan Hmoud on the results of the King's trip, which aimed at strengthening and developing bilateral relations.

The Regent also was briefed on the government's plans to deal with the country's economic, water and agricultural situations, as well as efforts to combat poverty and unemployment.

Prince Hamzah praised the government for giving the utmost priority to such issues and stressed the need to implement the directives in the King's letter of designation to the government by developing comprehensive plans to meet the nation's needs.

Also attending the meeting was Deputy Prime Minister Ayman Majali.

Later on Saturday, the Regent inspected the headquarters of the Armed Forces, where he held talks with Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mira'i Kaabneh and other senior military officials.

Also Saturday, Prince Hamzah, deputising for King Abdullah, opened the sixth meeting of Arab students studying in Jordanian universities at Al Karameh Scout Camp.

During the meeting, organised by the Ministry of Education and public and private universities, the Regent discussed a number of issues with the participants.

At the end of the event, attended by a number of deputies and officials, Minister of Youth and Sports Mohammad Kheir Mamsar presented a gift to Prince Hamzah.

Gunmen kill top Iran general

TEHRAN (R) — Gunmen disguised as Tehran city street cleaners shot and killed a leading Iranian general on Saturday, in an attack claimed by the main armed opposition group.

An armed forces statement, quoted by the official IRNA News Agency, said Lieutenant General Ali Sayyad Shirazi, deputy chief of staff of the armed forces and a hero of the eight-year war with Iraq, was killed at 6:45 a.m. as he left home for work.

The statement gave no other details of how Sayyad Shirazi died or the identity of his killers, other than to brand them "mercenary terrorist elements."

However, Iranian media quoted eyewitnesses as saying Sayyad Shirazi, who had just received word of promotion to Iran's top military rank, was shot three times in the head and neck by gunmen dressed as municipal street cleaners.

The state-owned Kayhan newspaper quoted witnesses as saying the gunmen fatally wounded the general by firing into his car through the passenger window.

Sayyad Shirazi was taking his child to school on his way to work, it said.

He died in hospital from his wounds shortly after the attack.

A spokesman for the Iraq-based Mujahadeen-e Khalq organisation told Reuters in Dubai by telephone that its units had carried out the assassination in north Tehran.

"Sayyad Shirazi was killed as he was being escorted by a group of heavily armed revolutionary guards acting as his bodyguard," Ali Safavi



Lieutenant General Ali Sayyad Shirazi

said from his office in Paris.

He said Sayyad Shirazi, born in 1944, was targeted because he was "responsible for purging and executing military personnel and [was] also responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of teenagers in the unpatriotic war with Iraq."

There was no independent confirmation of the Mujahadeen claim but the killing bore all the hallmarks of the armed opposition group's operations.

Iranian officials were in no doubt that the group, blamed for a spate of similar attacks over the past year, was behind the shooting. The commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards vowed to avenge Sayyad Shirazi.

"Based on information received, the terrorist group [Mujahadeen] have claimed responsibility for the attack. The Revolutionary Guards and the army will take severe revenge," said General Rahim Safavi, commander of the elite guards.

State television quoted

President Mohammad Khatami as saying the assailants would be "punished for their act of treason."

Sayyad Shirazi's wife said he had died in the cause of Islam and the Iranian revolution.

"These elements commit such acts in a bid to destroy our Islamic government and revolution," his wife, unnamed in the report, told television.

Major General Hassan Firouzabadi, joint chief of staff commander, sent condolences to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader and commander-in-chief of its armed forces.

Iran has witnessed several attacks on senior officials in recent months, and Sayyad Shirazi was the second to be killed in the past year.

In August, Assadollah Lajevardi, the former head of Iran's prisons, was gunned down in his shop in the Tehran bazaar. The Mujahadeen also claimed responsibility for that attack.

Last January, the head of the Tehran judiciary survived an assassination attempt by gunmen on a motorcycle, another favoured Mujahadeen tactic.

Iran has urged Western governments to curb the activities of the Mujahadeen, which has extensive operations in Europe and North America. It also maintains military bases in Iraq, near the Iranian border.

The group has recently stepped up armed actions and cross-border raids from Iraq after a period in which it unsuccessfully courted the West through political and diplomatic means.

India offers Arafat support for Palestinian state

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India fully supports the Palestinian people's "legitimate and inalienable" right to an independent state, the foreign affairs ministry said on Saturday.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, on a one-day visit, earlier held talks with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and President K.R. Narayanan. A ministry statement said they underlined India's "consistent and unwavering support to the Palestinian cause."

They also "emphasised that a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the

region could only be based on relevant U.N. resolutions and the principle of land for peace."

Arafat came to India as part of a world tour to garner support for the Palestinian cause and seek views on whether he should declare a sovereign state on May 4.

He has come under pressure from the international community, including the United States and Russia, to postpone the declaration at least until after Israeli elections on May 17.

The Indian statement made no mention of the May 4 date.

"India supports the Pal-

estinian people's legitimate and inalienable right to a 'homeland and was one of the first countries to recognise the state of Palestine in 1988," it said.

It said India also upheld the right of all the states in the region, including Palestine and Israel, to "coexist peacefully" within secure and internationally recognised borders.

Arafat, who arrived from Bangladesh late Friday, also met Sonia Gandhi, leader of the main opposition Congress Party.

A spokesman for the Palestinian embassy told AFP that Arafat was "here

for consultations and to take advice whether India will support his plans to declare Palestine an independent state."

He is due to take a final decision at a meeting of the Palestinian National Council in Gaza on April 27.

The spokesman said Arafat would travel to Pakistan later Saturday and would stop over in Yemen, and possibly in some African states, before arriving in China on April 14.

During a visit to Japan on Thursday, Arafat was urged by Tokyo to delay the declaration.

Reports there said the

Palestinian leader expressed an inclination to postpone the unilateral declaration from May 4 — when an interim period of autonomy under the 1993 Oslo accord expires.

Japan warned that any declaration now could stall a U.S.-brokered accord to restart the Middle East peace process, which was signed by Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu late last year.

Netanyahu has threatened to annex the remainder of the occupied territories if Arafat declares a state outside the framework of the planned final status talks.

Clouds hamper NATO strikes; U.S. plans to send more aircraft

Russia reiterates intent to stay out of Balkans conflict; refugees airlifted to Poland, Germany

BELGRADE (Agencies) — Cloudy skies hampered NATO air raids on Yugoslavia on Saturday but the country's official news agency reported cruise missile strikes near the Kosovo capital Pristina, and the United States announced plans for a big boost in NATO air power.

Hundreds of Kosovo refugees were flown to Germany and Poland from Macedonia, where about 50 new arrivals crossed the frontier after skirting minefields and hiding in forests to evade Yugoslav security forces.

Prime Minister Tony Blair assured Britain it was under no threat from Russia, in spite of President Boris Yeltsin's warning on Friday that NATO was running the risk of drawing Moscow into its Balkan

war. The United States announced plans to send 82 more warplanes to join the NATO force bombarding Yugoslavia and said it still felt sure the West could bring Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to heel without sending ground troops into combat in Kosovo.

"We're going to persist until we prevail," said National Security Council spokesman David Leavy. "And we're confident that day by day, as we attack his military infrastructure, we can achieve our objectives."

Pentagon spokesman Ken Bacon said the United States was committing 24 more F-16 fighters armed with HARM anti-radar missiles, four more tank-busting A-10

Thunderbolt attack aircraft, six radar-jamming EA-6B prowlers, 39 KC-135 and two KC-10 refuelling tanker aircraft and seven C130 transports.

Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov told the Turkish daily Hurriyet that he would not allow a land offensive into Kosovo to be launched from his country, where NATO has 12,000 troops, its main ground combat force in the area.

A Cypriot envoy blamed NATO's bombing campaign for his failure to win the freedom of three U.S. servicemen captured March 31 along the Macedonian border. Spyros Kyprianou, speaker of the Cyprus parliament, returned home empty-handed Saturday after a two-day visit. U.S.

officials had pinned scant hopes on his mission.

Milosevic issued a message marking the Orthodox Easter without referring to the air strikes on his country, now in their 18th day.

"I wish a happy Easter to all citizens of Orthodox faith and I wish peace, progress and happiness to all Yugoslav citizens and to all our people," his message said.

NATO officials in Brussels said that cloud cover over Yugoslavia had scrubbed three of four bombing missions overnight and more bad weather was forecast over the weekend.

But Western ships continued to fire cruise missiles and the alliance said it has punched a huge hole in Yugoslav military resources

in its campaign to make Belgrade let a NATO-led military force protect Kosovo's ethnic Albanians.

"We have inflicted a hell of a lot of damage," said NATO spokesman Jamie Shea. "We have severely damaged about 150 major targets."

Shea said that half of Yugoslavia's MiG-29 fighters have now been destroyed.

The Yugoslav military, in a commentary carried Saturday, by the state-run Tanjug news agency, denied NATO strategy as a "fiasco." The weekly Vojiska, or Army, said Western military planners had no option but to make peace and lose credibility — or mount a ground campaign with heavy losses.

Serbian TV's transmitter at Golac near the Kosovo capital

Pristina was knocked off the air by a strike during the night, along with mobile and landline telephones in Kosovo.

Tanjug said missiles struck a railway station in the Kosovo town of Polje in the early hours and the airport at Stajina, southwest of Pristina, in the afternoon.

NATO said it had hit a microwave relay and oil production and storage depots near Pristina and at Smederevo and Valjevo near Belgrade.

In Albania more than 2,000 refugees — an entire village — streamed across the Yugoslav border overnight. They said Serb soldiers and police had forced them from their homes at gunpoint.

They were followed after daybreak by dozens of people

from two neighbouring towns who said several thousand more were on the way after Serb forces awakened them with mortar fire and gave them five minutes to get out.

Separately, about 50 people emerged from Macedonia around midday after walking along railway tracks to skirt Serbian minefields, they told international monitors who went to them at the Blace crossing into the former Yugoslav Republic.

Busload after busload of refugees arrived at Skopje airport to board flights for Germany. Three planes with more than 700 refugees had left by mid-afternoon.

A planeload of 60 refugees, including 34 children, also flew from Macedonia to Warsaw — the first airlift to

Poland.

Some NATO governments, including the United States and Canada, have put on hold their offers to take in thousands of the 500,000 people who have fled Kosovo since March 24 because the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR urged that refugees stay in the region if possible.

After clashes near Kosovo's western border, the Yugoslav army warned Albania on Saturday that it could not allow "terrorists" — meaning Kosovo's ethnic Albanian guerrillas — to attack from its territory without risking escalation of the war.

Albania in turn accused Yugoslavia of an unprovoked attack on border guards and villagers.

Egypt postpones verdict in trial of 107 Islamists

CAIRO (R) — An Egyptian military court on Saturday postponed a session at which verdicts were due in the cases of 107 Islamists said to belong to the Jihad group.

Lawyers said the session had been rescheduled for April 18 to allow more time for deliberation among the three judges in the biggest single trial of militants since those that followed the assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1981.

Two of the judges, including court President Brigadier Ahmad Al Anwar, have not handled cases of Islamists before, defence lawyer Muntasser Al Zayyat told Reuters.

The defendants, 67 of whom are being tried in their absence, include Ayman Al Zawahri, leader of the Jihad group and now believed to be hiding in Afghanistan along with his

associate, Saudi-born dissident Osama Ben Laden.

The accused also include several militants handed over to Egypt in recent months by Albania, Azerbaijan, Ecuador, South Africa, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Jihad, which has specialised in trying to assassinate Egyptian political and security figures, vowed last month to continue its struggle to overthrow President Hosni Mubarak's secular rule and turn Egypt into a strict Islamic state.

The pledge was contained in a Jihad statement issued a few days after a unilateral ceasefire announcement by Egypt's biggest militant group, Al Gamaa Al Islamiyya (Islamic group).

On March 25, Gamaa leaders in exile in Afghanistan and elsewhere announced support for the first time for a July 1997

truce called by their jailed colleagues in Egypt.

The six Gamaa leaders, imprisoned since Sadat's killing, form nearly half the group's 13-man leadership council. Its head, Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, is serving a life term in the United States for plotting to blow up New York City landmarks.

The trial of the 107 militants offers the government a chance to differentiate between Jihad and Gamaa, now that Gamaa leaders have united in favour of abandoning the armed struggle.

"They [the government] must give strong signals that they distinguish between those who have ceased fire and those who insist on continuing fighting," one Islamist source said.

But the authorities have given no public signal that

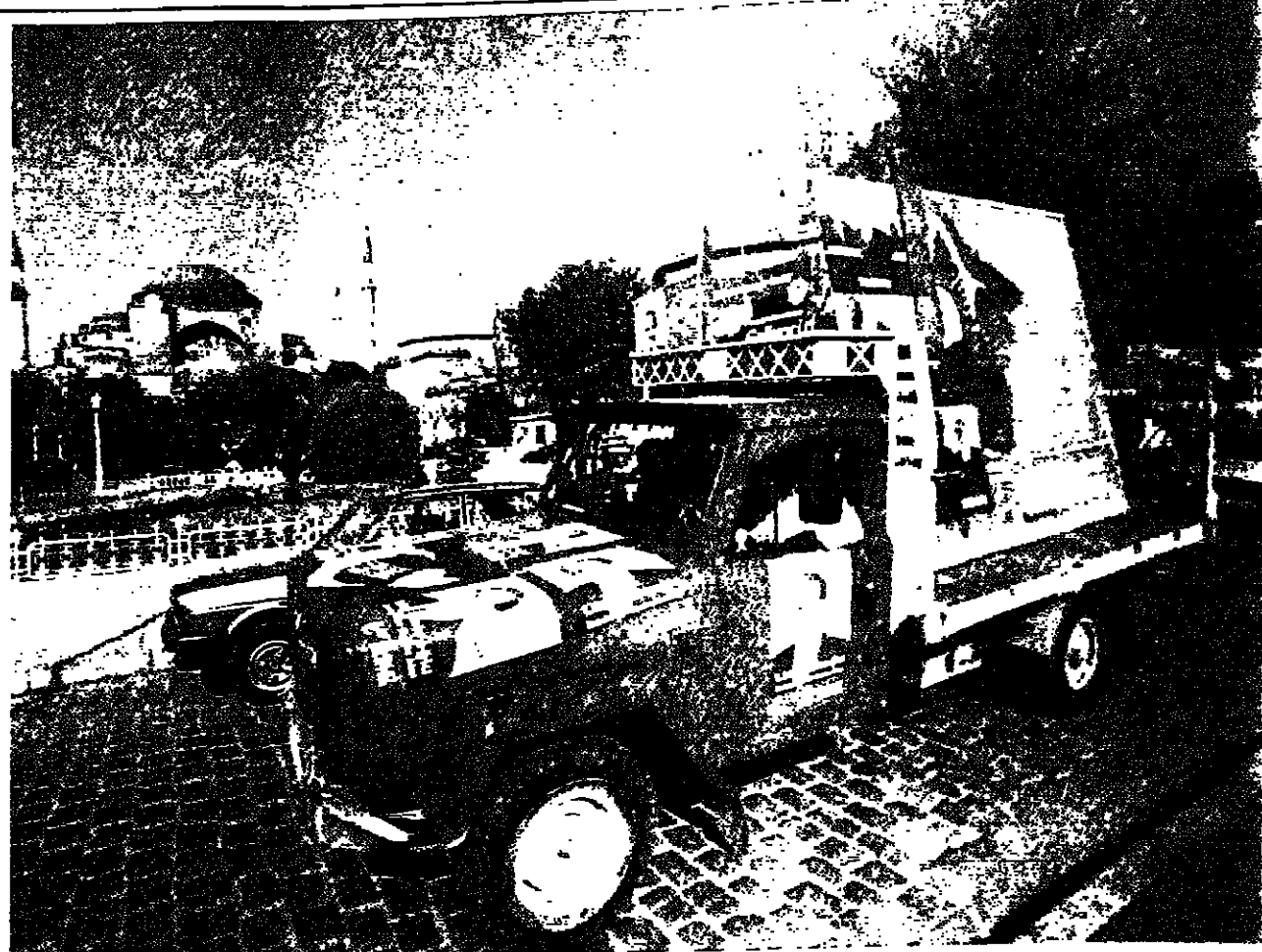
they are ready to take a more lenient approach to Gamaa.

Last week a presidential decree referred 22 suspected Gamaa members to a military court, whose verdicts cannot be appealed.

Hussein Amin, Egypt's former ambassador to Algeria and expert on Islamist militancy, said: "If the government is really wise, it should take a conciliatory line."

Gamaa and Jihad joined forces before Sadat's assassination but the two outlawed groups parted company again later.

Their campaign against the government has killed about 1,200 people, mostly militants and police, since 1992, but the violence has largely fizzled since Gamaa gunmen massacred 58 tourists and four Egyptians in Luxor in November 1997.



TURKEY'S ELECTIONS: An election campaign car of Islamic Virtue Party passes by the historical St. Sophia mosque in Sultanahmet, a tourist district of Istanbul on Saturday. Millions of Turks have been left behind amid Turkey's economic growth and are again expected to help propel the Islamic party to a prominent position in parliament after April 18 elections (AP photo)

Syria slams U.S. sanctions on arms firms

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria lashed out on Saturday at a U.S. decision to impose sanctions on three Russian arms firms which sold military hardware to the Syrian armed forces.

"The United States is getting carried away and imposing sanctions against Russian arms manufacturers who are selling Syria anti-tank missiles, which are defensive weapons which can be used to repulse Israeli attacks against Syrian territory," the official Al Thawra daily said.

Describing the U.S. stand as "paradoxical," the newspaper noted that Israel at the same time

was receiving "100 sophisticated U.S. aircraft capable of hitting most of the Middle East, notably Arab capitals."

"It is a policy of double standards because Washington is supplying arms on a daily basis to Israel which give it qualitative superiority over the Arabs," Al Thawra said.

"The United States is preventing us from defending ourselves and allowing Israel... to harm Arab capitals," the daily said.

The newspaper denounced Israel for "occupying Arab land, violating their rights and international resolutions which call for an Israeli

withdrawal from Palestinian territory, Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon."

Al Thawra added that Monday's visit to Moscow by Syrian President Hafez Assad "will be an element contributing to political equilibrium between the Arabs and their chief adversary [Israel]."

"Syria, backed by new military and political relations with Russia, can and will be an essential element in establishing an equilibrium in the region," it said.

Assad is to make a two-day visit to Russia beginning Monday, his first to

Moscow since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The U.S. State Department announced last week that sanctions would be imposed on the Tula Design Bureau, the Volsky Mechanical Plant and the Tsniitochmash plant for concluding deals to supply anti-tank missiles to Syria, a country blacklisted by Washington as a supporter of terrorism.

The Russian foreign ministry denounced the move and said the U.S. decision would deal a further blow to bilateral relations already strained by breaking point over the Kosovo crisis.

Iraq sceptical U.N. talks will bring anything new

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Baghdad on Saturday said it was sceptical that talks within the U.N. Security Council would lead to a lifting of the crippling embargo on Iraq because the body was under the thumb of the United States.

The official Al Jumhuriya daily said Washington and London were "perfidiously" blocking Security Council efforts to review ties with Iraq and were keen to wreck Russian, French and Chinese oil contracts with Baghdad.

"The painful reality is that the United Nations and the Security Council cannot resist the American hegemony," the newspaper said.

The comments follow talks by the 15-member Security Council on the three panels set up in January in a bid to end council deadlock on policy toward Iraq.

The panels focused on Iraqi disarmament, the humanitarian situation and issues stemming from the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, including the return of prisoners and

restitution of Kuwaiti archives.

Iraq on Friday rejected as "biased" the conclusions of the disarmament and humanitarian panel.

The most contentious panel was that on disarmament, on which the five permanent members — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — remain divided.

On Friday, Britain, the Netherlands and the United States repeated their opposition to a lifting of sanctions because Iraq had not been fully disarmed of its weapons of

mass destruction, diplomats said.

The other 12 members supported lifting the oil embargo as an incentive to Iraq to cooperate with a future arms monitoring system recommended by the disarmament panel.

Under U.N. resolutions, the oil embargo imposed after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait can only be lifted when all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and the means to make them have been dismantled.

Israeli settlement expansion draws sharp criticism

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. government accused Israel on Friday of making it difficult to achieve peace in the Middle East by expanding Jewish housing on the West Bank.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright delivered the lecture to Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon in an one-hour meeting in her office.

"We are particularly concerned," said James Rubin, the State Department spokesman.

Rubin also suggested

Israel was not keeping its promise to halt construction at Jewish settlements on the West Bank, which PNA President Yasser Arafat hopes to take over for a Palestinian state.

"We have been told in the past that these types of activities would not take place as a matter of Israeli policy, both before, during and after the Wye negotiations," Rubin said, referring to the U.S.-mediated negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians last

October. "And that's why we've expressed our concern so clearly to the foreign minister."

Sharon made no reference to the settlements when he spoke briefly to reporters before Rubin gave his account of the Albright meeting.

The State Department, frustrated by a slowdown in Middle East peace-making, has credited Arafat with moving against terrorism and insisted Israel should go through with a 13.1 per cent pullback from the

West Bank promised in the Wye accords.

Sharon said "there is no question Arafat has done a few things," but "so far as waging a war against the terrorist infrastructure, this he has not done."

Albright again assured Sharon the administration was working hard to keep Arafat from declaring that he intends to establish a Palestinian state next month.

But that pledge was more than balanced by continuing U.S. determi-

nation to see Israel relinquish more territory and Albright's denunciation of Israeli settlement activity.

Rubin told reporters Israel was both constructing new settlements and expanding existing ones far beyond their boundaries, "in many cases expanding to distant hilltops."

These activities, he said, could prejudice future negotiations on control of the West Bank. "they make it very difficult to pursue peace," he

said.

Arafat insists the Palestinians have the right to virtually all of the West Bank — territory Israel occupied in the 1967 Mideast war — and has vowed to establish on it a Palestinian state with its capital in Jerusalem.

"We have made clear for a long time now that we are opposed to all unilateral actions by either side, including a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state," Rubin said.

However, Rubin said,

"we also made clear that we're opposed to unilateral acts by Israel, including and especially settlement activity. Specifically, we're concerned about an accelerated pattern of Israeli actions on the ground since Wye which have become clearer in recent months."

On another controversial front, Sharon said Albright had not voiced any "displeasure" about his recent statement that Kosovo could pose a terrorism threat if Islamist

extremists take control and establish an independent state there.

But Rubin said Albright "did express some concern about various reports of things that he had said."

President Bill Clinton and Albright "obviously would want the maximum support from all of our friends and allies and others as we pursue what we believe is a just cause," said Rubin, who noted that Israel was providing relief to Muslim refugees from Kosovo.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO

18:00French Programme
18:30 The Prince and The Pauper
19:00Le Journal
19:15French Programme
19:30News headlines
19:33French Programme
20:30Walker Texas Ranger
21:15Divine Pledge
22:00News in English
22:20Blind Faith
23:59End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

03:48Fajr
05:08(Sunrise) Duha
11:37Dhuhr
15:12Asr
18:05Maghreb
19:26Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624833/4624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751.
Armenian International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifeh
Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church
Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church
Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

On Sunday, temperatures are expected to rise with warm weather conditions prevailing. Clouds will appear at high altitudes and winds southeasterly moderate. On Monday, it will be cloudy and rainy particular in the northern parts of the Kingdom. Temperatures are

expected to dip gradually and winds westerly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be warm, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min/Max. temp.
Amman09/27
Aqaba17/32
Deserts08/29
Jordan Valley16/31

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 23 Aqaba 29. Humidity readings: Amman 14 per cent. Aqaba 30 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun06/22
Jerash10/25
Um Qays10/25
Madaba09/27
Petra08/29
Dead Sea16/31

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mazin Nball5350435
Dr. Abdul Majid Al Sha'ir4391405
Dr. Hani Al Ahmad4394336
Dr. Fakhri Bilal5522233

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadiah Pharmacy537004
Ruh Al Dawa Pharmacy 536169

IRBID:
Dr. Issam Salih(02)246858
Fou'ad Pharmacy(02)275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Fadi Al Khatib(05)3650753
Palestine Pharmacy(05)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192 4621111 4637777
Fire Brigade4671701
Blood Bank4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic Police4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints7871111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdli5666131/7
Husseini Medical Centre5856856
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity4642816
Abul Amman Maternity4642362
Malhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5607431
Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4777101/3
Al-Bashir4775111/2/5
Army, Marka4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Amal Hospital5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000
Jerusalem Hospital4387181

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323

ZARQA National Hospital
(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital(09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital(02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital(02)272375
Jeddah (add) (RJ)
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital(02) 7101372, (02) 7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital(02) 7102831, (02) 7102011
Speciality Hospital(02) 7103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital
(03)2014111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (44) 52700 or (44) 523250. Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
18:15Paris (RJ)
18:20Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
19:00London, Brussels (RJ)
19:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
19:15Jeddah (add) (RJ)
19:45Bangkok, Doha (RJ)
20:10Beirut (RJ)
20:20Jeddah (RJ)
21:00Frankfurt, Berlin (RJ)
21:05Rome (RJ)
21:05Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
21:20Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
21:50Vienna, Athens (RJ)
22:10Vienna, Aqaba (RJ)
01:20Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights
07:55Dubai (EK)
09:00Sanaa (Y)
10:30Kuwait (KU)
11:50Moscow (SU)
12:00Abu Dhabi (GF)
12:30Jeddah (SV)
14:15Doha (QR)
17:35Beirut (ME)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
07:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
10:30 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
04:30Beirut (RJ)
05:20Aqaba, Paris (add) (RJ)
08:15Frankfurt (RJ)
08:30Aqaba (add) (RJ)
11:15Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:30Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:30Rome (RJ)
11:35Athens, Vienna (RJ)
12:25London (RJ)
20:20Jeddah (RJ)
21:30New Delhi (RJ)
21:35Cairo (RJ)
21:40Bangkok (RJ)
21:45Damascus (RJ)
21:45Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
23:30Sanaa (RJ)
00:30 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)
01:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights
09:00Abu Dhabi, Dubai (EK)
10:00Sanaa (Y)
11:45Kuwait (KU)
12:05Doha (GF)
13:20Moscow (SU)
14:00Jeddah (SV)
15:15Doha (QR)
18:35Beirut (ME)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
08:15 Tel Aviv (arriving from QAIA) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

Government, public diverge in assessment of Kosovo crisis

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — Government and civil society institutions are split over the Kosovo crisis, with the state clearly supporting NATO, while associations and political parties condemn the attacks against Serbia as a flagrant violation of international law.

On March 30 Jordan recalled its chargé d'affaires in Belgrade in protest of Serbian actions, defined by a Royal Court spokesman as "ethnic cleansing, killing and displacement" of Muslim ethnic Albanians from the Serbian province of Kosovo.

Expressing deep concern over the reported Serbian crimes against Kosovars, His Majesty King Abdullah instructed the government to send humanitarian and medical assistance to the refugees.

An air bridge was opened last weekend with Her Majesty Queen Rania's mission to Macedonia, where she saw the distribution of 18,000 tonnes of tents, blankets, and food donated by individuals and charities.

Jordan's official stand vis-à-vis the Kosovo crisis was similar to that of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, which concluded an emergency meeting in Geneva on Wednesday expressing full support for NATO and condemning the policy of "ethnic cleansing" perpetrated by Serbian authorities against Albanian Kosovars.

But most political parties, professional associations and opinion leaders have taken a diametrically opposite stand, accusing NATO of provoking the human tragedy of refugees from Kosovo.

The country's strongest party, the Islamic Action Front, has squarely placed the blame on NATO, describing the crisis as a conspiracy orchestrated by the Atlantic alliance to clear the Balkans of all Muslims, while claiming to act in their defence.

According to IAF Secretary General Abdul Latif Ahrabi, the U.S. "knew that once they launched strikes against Serbia, Serbs would have reacted by attacking the Kosovars."

"Public opinion has to understand this conspiracy aimed to cancel any Muslim presence from the Balkans."

The Muslim Brotherhood used almost the same wording in a statement last week, warning "Arab and Muslim peoples and leaders [against] the international conspiracy aimed at driving Muslims out of Europe."

While denouncing the "barbaric Serbian aggression against Muslim citizens of Kosovo and calling on all Arab and Islamic nations to halt this massacre of humanity," the Brotherhood also maintained that NATO's hidden agenda was the same as that of the Milosevic regime — cleansing

Kosovo of ethnic Albanians.

The Jordan Writers Association last week issued the latest in a series of official communiqués by many syndicates condemning NATO strikes as aimed at destroying Yugoslavia's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and unity, while "humiliating Russia before the world, and asserting U.S. supremacy over the European Union."

Intellectuals and ordinary people alike have conceded their sense of hesitancy and unease in approving of air strikes that target a regime accused of suppressing its Muslim population, but that are, at the same time, led by the same powers — the U.S. and Great Britain — that attacked Iraq and championed sanctions against several Arab states.

Together with the usual scepticism towards U.S. and NATO intents, it is also the political record of former Yugoslavia that makes some Jordanians reluctant to subscribe to Western arguments; Yugoslavia, a founding member of the United Nations and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as the Non-Aligned Movement, has traditionally been a precious ally of Arabs and a warm advocate of the Palestinian cause in international fora during the Cold War.

Ties with Arab countries have been close since General Tito's time. According to Atef Kawar, a contractor who studied in and travels regularly to the Yugoslav Federation, some 50,000 Jordanians have graduated from Yugoslav universities, and around 2,500 Yugoslav women are currently married to Jordanians.

Two thousand Jordanians presently reside in Yugoslavia, says Kawar, while many infrastructure projects in the Kingdom were funded and carried out by Yugoslavians, from the King Talal Dam and the Amman-Azraq road to the Sweileh Bridge, in Amman, and water and sewage systems in remote areas, such as the northern town of Ramtha.

The prestigious Al Al Bayr University was also built thanks to a barter-deal with Belgrade against Jordanian phosphates, that Yugoslavia imports in significant quantities.

"There are neither religious nor ethnic motives behind NATO's attacks, which serve the purpose of emphasising U.S. hegemony on the whole world, by cornering Russia and China, and showing that, in the same way as Washington controlled the U.N. Security Council nine years ago to attack Iraq, it can also control NATO," said Kawar.

Many columnists have drawn the comparison between the U.S.-led strikes against Belgrade and those against Baghdad.

"Not only were the same weapons and strategies used, but in both cases the U.S. openly declared its intention to overthrow the existing regime," said Al Dastour last week in an unsigned editorial.

Arabs and Jordanians alike "feel powerless and indecisive vis-à-vis this war [...] The victims in this crisis are Muslim people, therefore it is no surprise that the Arab and Islamic worlds have condemned the Serbian campaigns against Kosovars," said Al Dastour.

"But we also realise that NATO's aggressive campaign sets a precedent, and proves that the U.S. can carry out any disciplinary military operation against any country or people it deems appropriate without referring to the United Nations."

Echoing such widespread views, columnist Rakan Majali wrote also last week that "the brutal military attacks against Serbia send a clear message to the world: That the U.S. has a free hand to operate anywhere at any time."

According to columnist Sufian Tell, the U.S. is applying an old winning strategy against two of its enemies: the Non-Aligned Movement, and Islam.

"If you have two enemies, wage a war between them. Whoever wins will be weak enough for you to easily finish him off."

But the Balkan crisis also gives the U.S. the opportunity to fight a third, even stronger enemy, says Tell.

"The euro, the sole rival of the U.S. dollar."

Together with parallels between the current war in the Balkans and the 1991 war against Iraq, columnists and ordinary people alike have also drawn a comparison between the tide of Albanian refugees fleeing their homes and the memory still vivid in the collective conscience of Palestinians driven away from their homes in the 1948 and 1967 wars.

"When we heard the Albanian refugees on television saying that they were intimidated to say good-bye to their homes and leave, or stay and die, we all remembered when the same words were directed at us by Jewish soldiers," wrote Al Arab Al Yawm's Mustafa Al Far in a recent column.

"What is happening in Kosovo today is what happened in Palestine in 1948: people are tortured, forced to leave their homes with only a few belongings, their passports are burnt, and they are escorted for miles on foot to the borders, dumped there, and prevented from returning."

"Now, will the international community remain silent while what happened to the Palestinians happens again today to these refugees?"

Anti-normalisation camp takes aim at Amman International Theatre Festival

By Dima Hamdan and Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — The anti-normalisation committee of Jordan's 13 professional associations on Saturday launched a boycott of the current Amman International Theatre Festival on grounds it is "financed by foreign sources and foreign groups participate in it."

A statement issued on Saturday by the committee also asked the Amman Municipality "to take the same stance on the issue, to keep in harmony with public opinion and hold local festivals that are purely patriotic."

Nader Omran, president of Al Fawanees Theatre Group that organised the festival, protested that "the language of the statement is general and

vague."

"They accuse us of receiving foreign funding, which can be misinterpreted to mean that we are taking funds from Israel," Omran told the Jordan Times in a telephone interview yesterday.

"We hoped they would be more accurate in acquiring their information. They should have contacted us directly instead of relying on third sources," he added.

The Artists Associations had raised questions about the festival, which opened on Thursday, because the organisers had invited Al Qasaba, a theatre group including Arab Israelis.

"We expected some forms of complaints and protests, but did not expect this to come from the professional associa-

tions, which we greatly respect."

Ali Abu Sukkar, head of the anti-normalisation committee, told the Jordan Times before the festival opened: "We have to differentiate between an Arab and an Israeli. However, my advice is to avoid any action that would raise suspicions."

According to Marwan Hamameh, member of Al Fawanees and manager of the festival, the boycott was "a private initiative by some individuals, which was not discussed either by the council of the Artists Association or by the Council of Presidents of the Professional Associations."

Rejecting the accusation of "normalising with Israel," members of Al Fawanees said yesterday's statement was part

of a campaign against their group.

"We are against normalisation as much as the Artists Association is, but they are targeting us for some reason with this false campaign," Hamameh protested.

"Al Qasaba is a group from east Jerusalem, based next to Orient House in east Jerusalem. Its members are Palestinians, and it never has received support from the Israeli ministry of culture," he said.

According to Hamameh, one of Al Qasaba members, actor Mohammad Bakri, who holds an Israeli passport, is being personally targeted by the boycott.

"But Bakri also participated in a festival here organised last summer by the Artists Associ-

ation and the Ministry of Culture. Did he not have an Israeli passport, back then?" asked Hamameh.

The Amman Theatre Festival is the latest victim of what observers have seen as a group of "zealots" in the professional associations, who, over the last year, have stepped up their campaign against seminars, conferences, and other events organised in cooperation with foreign institutions, claiming they are part of a "Zionist infiltration" of Jordanian intelligentsia and cultural life.

The syndicates, with a membership of around 80,000 and mainly dominated by Islamists, have fiercely opposed the 1994 peace treaty with Israel and championed a campaign to combat normalisation with the Jewish state.

Police refer landlords to court for violations of new residency and labour regulations

By Mohammad Ben Hussien

AMMAN — Police have referred scores of Jordanian landlords to court for violating one-week-old residency rules enforced by the government in a bid to organise the labour market, Ghazi Falah, deputy director of the Public Security Department said Saturday.

"Foreigners are questioned by police, during regular patrols or in isolated crackdown campaigns, about the place of their residences. If the police discovers that landlords have not informed the nearest police station with details about their tenant, they are immediately referred to court," another official from the PSD, who requested anonymity, said.

Falah could not disclose the exact number of people being referred to court.

Under the new regulations, employers must present the nearest police station with details about any foreign employees in less than 48 hours, owners of furnished apartments must inform police in less than 24 hours of any foreigners who reside on the premises. They also must immediately inform the police as soon as the tenant leaves the rented place.

Landlords and employers who fail to meet the new regulations will face criminal charges ranging from severe fines to imprisonment. Foreigners will immediately be deported.

The government said that its campaign against foreign workers did not lose its steam.

"We have started the process of regulating the Jordanian labour market. We are serious in our drive to fight unemployment," Minister of Interior Nayef Qadi said Saturday.

The government which is fighting an uphill battle to replace foreign workers with Jordanians, is also eager to acquire accurate statistics of the estimated one million non-Jordanian labourers — at least 35 per cent of the labour force is believed to be jobless.

The government gave foreigners a grace period to rectify their legal status, and whoever is caught after this period will be asked to leave the country," Qadi told the Jordan Times.

According to the Labour Law, 14 categories of employment are restricted to Jordanian labourers including doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, engineers, and teachers.

Ministry of Labour figures show that around 170,000 foreigners have rectified their status.

Unemployment in Jordan is officially estimated at 16 per cent while independently at around 27 per cent.

Other provisions of the new law include issuing foreigners a temporary residency card upon their entry into Jordan. The cards would include information such as nationality, date and place of birth, passport number and place of issue and the reason for visiting.

However, officials at Al Karamea border post with Iraq complained that foreign labourers, mostly from Egypt, Syria and Iraq, who enter the country for the first time, randomly chose a hotel

name in Amman as the place of their residency. This, the official said, makes it very difficult for police to keep records.

"Iraqis who know nothing in the country make their companions select any hotel name in downtown Amman and fill in the entry form with that name," the official told the Jordan Times on Thursday.

Police officials said such cases were the exception rather than the rule, and did not constitute a serious problem in record keeping.

"In any case foreigners will have to inform the police with the place of their residence within two weeks," Fayez Da'aja, deputy head of the Department of Borders and Residency at the PSD, told the Jordan Times.

Hard to hide in the grass, but easy to enjoy JRD gives egg decoration a new twist

By Rana Awwad

AMMAN — A collection of hand-painted ostrich eggs depicting Jordan's natural heritage is currently on display at the Jordan River Designs as part of efforts to generate income for impoverished citizens.

The exhibition, the first of its kind in Jordan, is presented by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, a non-governmental organisation devoted to the preservation of wildlife in the Kingdom.

The week-long display, which opened on Wednesday, features colourful illustration of oryxes, gazelles, buffaloes, ibexes and other rare species currently bred in Jordan's six nature reserves, some of which were inspired by Qasr Amra mosaics. The illustrations painted onto the eggs are the creation of local artist Oraib Sakkiyah. The eggs were provided by the Shaumari Wildlife Reserve near Azraq which introduced an ostrich breeding programme in 1979.

Only infertile eggs are used, in line with JRD's philosophy of natural heritage preservation.

"After examining eggs, we only take

those that are proved to be infertile," and "we carefully empty and clean the eggs before colouring them," said Sakkiyah, who is a nature activist, to the Jordan Times.

"The eggs project falls under the activities of the society's socio-economic department, which was established in 1994 to lead and further boost local conservation projects," said Rebecca Salti, manager of the Dana's Economic Development Project.

Salti explained that the revenues of such activities are used to support sustainable development projects. She added that the society's "ultimate goal is to teach locals how to make use of ostrich eggs to generate their own income."

In an attempt to increase Jordan's ostrich population, the RSCN has initiated the Ostrich Adoption Programme, in which "foster parents" can adopt an ostrich for JD40 a year.

The exhibition which ends on Monday, coincides with the Easter holiday, during which Christian children traditionally paint eggs for the traditional Easter egg hunt.

Court hands death sentence to student convicted of murder

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Criminal Court sentenced a 20-year-old student convicted of robbing and murdering his friend in December 1997 to death last week.

The court tribunal said Abdullah Sa'adi guilty of the premeditated murder of Ra'ed Ibrahim, 24. The prosecutor said Sa'adi stabbed the victim, slashed his throat, and robbed him of JD500.

The incident occurred in the victim's car. According to court transcripts a day before the incident, Sa'adi went to the Hashmicheh Square downtown, Amman, and purchased a switchblade which he used in the murder.

On Dec. 3, the victim picked up the defendant at his home, and the two friends went for a ride to the park, the court papers said. When Ibrahim drove into a deserted area, Sa'adi

drew his knife and stabbed him once in the chest, the court said.

"The defendant then pulled [the victim] to the ground and slit his throat, then fled the scene with the victim's car," the court stated.

The defendant told the prosecutor general that he killed Ibrahim because he had asked him to have sex with him on several occasions, and that on the evening of the incident, he was again propositioned. However, the court rejected the accusations of sexual overtures because "the defendant contradicted his statements and was unable to provide evidence to prove his story."

The tribunal was comprised of Justices Mohammad Ajameh, Mifteh Mubaidin and Issa Hamdan. The verdict will automatically be reviewed by a higher court within 30 days.

Jubilee student briefs U.S. Pentagon on Jordan's environment

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan's Ghaida Nassar, a Jubilee School student, represented the Kingdom in a programme on future world leaders held in Washington with the participation of students from 28 countries.

In her worksheet entitled "Environment Protection," Nassar provided a detailed presentation on Jordan's history, followed by suggestions relating to environment protection.

The programme's schedule included lectures, seminars and meetings with several policy-makers at the Congress, the Pentagon, in addition to some visits to various American institutions.

The participation comes under the framework of the school's philosophy which calls for exchanging expertise and getting acquainted with foreign cultures through such participations.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Qadhafi calls King

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Saturday received a phone call from Libyan President Muammar Qadhafi. The two leaders discussed bilateral relations. King Abdullah congratulated President Qadhafi on the lifting of the sanctions and voiced his appreciation of Qadhafi's sincere and honourable stand by Jordan.

Ajameh appointed telecommunications secretary general

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal Decree was issued on Saturday endorsing the Cabinet's decision to appoint Abdul Majid Al Masha'aleh Al Ajameh as secretary general of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications. Ajameh succeeds Muzahem Al Muheisen, who was appointed director general of the Vocational Training Corporation.

Kaabneh meets Turkish naval commander

AMMAN (Petra) — Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mira'i Al Kaabneh on Saturday reviewed with the visiting Commander of the Turkish Naval Force General Salem Daroush Oulo the situations in the region and bilateral cooperation, in addition to issues of common concern. The meeting was attended by Chief of Staff for Land Forces, the Commander of the Royal Navy Force, the Turkish ambassador to Jordan and the Turkish military attaché in Amman.

What's Going On

AMMAN INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL

- Workshop entitled "Technical Elements in the Theatre" at the Royal Cultural Centre (10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.)
- Mask Making Workshop by May Wather and Wafa Quossous at Tyche Hotel on Sunday April 12 (10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.)
- Making cartoons with Children by Erling Ericksson at the Hayy Nazzal Development Centre, daily until April 14 (2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.)
- Tanzanian play "Death of a Coconut Tree," Egyptian play "The Last Trip," Iraqi Play "Sidra" and Jordanian play "Shahrazad's Dreams" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Sunday and Monday respectively at 6:00 p.m., 8:00 p.m., 7:30 p.m., and 9:00 p.m.

SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDY

- Shakespeare's comedy "Kings and Clowns" at the InterContinental Hotel at 8:30 p.m. (There will be another performance on Monday 12 April at 8:30 p.m.)

LECTURE

- "Drama As Social Conscience: Priestly's 'An Inspector Calls'" by Dr. Nicholas Linfield at the British Council, Jamal Amman on Monday April 12 at 5:00 p.m.

DOCUMENTARY ON POVERTY

- "Poverty: The Human Dimension" — Radio Jordan's documentary at 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. (The programme, broadcast every Monday at these times, attempts to shed light on the different dimensions of poverty in Jordan through a critical analysis of the various formal and informal agencies and programmes that provide assistance to the poor).

FILMS

- "The Wedding Singer" at Books@Cafe, Jabal Amman at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650457/8).
- "Wild Strawberries" at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman on Tuesday April 13 at 6:30 p.m.
- "Phenomenon" at Books@Cafe, Jabal Amman, on Tuesday April 13 at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 5650458).
- "First Knight" at the British Council, Jabal Amman on Tuesday, April 13 at 6:00 p.m. (Children's film "The Magic of the Faraway Tree" will be screened on Wednesday April 14 at 5:00 p.m.)

EXHIBITIONS

- Plastic art exhibition by Hussein Da'ssa entitled "Horizons of the Nineties" at Orient Gallery, Shmeisani, until April 20 (Tel. 56813034).
- Works by Jordanian ceramist Mahmoud Taha at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until May 6. Also showing an exhibition of photographs by Jordanian artist Adnan Sharif entitled "Spring at Darat Al Funun," until May 6.

J.N. talks
ring new

criticism

DAR

Belo calls off dialogue over massacre denial

DILI, East Timor (AFP) — East Timorese Nobel laureate Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo announced Saturday that he had called off reconciliation talks because of official denials that a massacre took place in Liquisa.

"I, Bishop Belo, decide to delay the dialogue Dare II scheduled to take place in April 1999, until I get more details from Armindo about the Liquisa incident," Belo told a brief press conference here.

Belo circulated a five-point statement challenging Armindo Mariano, the head of the local parliament in East Timor, to explain his comments that only five people had died in Liquisa.

Belo has said that at least 25 people were killed in Tuesday's alleged massacre of refugees by pro-Indonesian militia in a churchyard in the East Timorese town of Liquisa. The Indonesian military says only five died.

Belo, the bishop of the East Timorese capital Dili, is a linchpin of a dialogue between pro and anti-independence factions in East Timor, the first session of which was held in the former Portuguese colony earlier this year.

The second session was scheduled to take place this month.

"I delay dialogue Dare II this month until the guns fall silent," Belo said.

The bishop stuck to the figure of 25 dead, adding that he had already "received 24 names reported directly by their families and witnesses."

Violence in East Timor has been rising since Indonesia made a surprise offer in January to relinquish the territory it invaded in 1975 if East Timorese reject an offer of autonomy.

Belo's statement came as Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights said it would send a team to East Timor next week to probe the massacre, and the state Antara news agency reported the shooting of an East Timorese man by an Indonesian security patrol.

The Australian embassy has, with the blessing of the Indonesian ministry, sent two staff members to East Timor to carry out their own probe of the incident, while the Red Cross said Friday it would try to send a

team to assess humanitarian needs in Liquisa.

Antara quoted the military as saying the man shot dead had been about to throw a grenade at the patrol. He was shot in the back, it said.

A senior United Nations official warned in New York Friday that a U.N.-organised ballot on the future status of East Timor — autonomy or independence — could be jeopardised by the mounting violence.

The U.N. special representative for East Timor, Jamsheed Marker, said he had obtained assurances from both the East Timorese and Indonesian sides that they would observe restraint.

"Our main purpose is to call for calm. We're arriving at a very critical moment in our negotiations, and it's essential that all sides try and maintain calm and peace," Marker said.

But "clearly it's not possible to hold these consultations in an atmosphere charged with fighting, that has to stop. And that's a prerequisite."

Marker spoke to journalists after meeting with key exiled East Timorese resistance leader Jose Ramos Horta, who said afterwards that he took such an appeal as "an order."

Horta also clarified a statement by jailed East Timorese independence leader Xanana Gusmao Monday, saying it was not a call for war but a "call for self-defence."

The Indonesian government Friday said it would return Gusmao to a high-security prison from house arrest in Jakarta if he failed to retract his call to arms to his followers.

Gusmao, serving a 20-year jail term for armed insurrection against the state, is seen by most diplomats in Jakarta as a key figure in any peaceful settlement in East Timor, and his move to house arrest last month was made to better enable him to assist in the negotiations.

"Any step to restrict Gusmao's ability to advance the dialogue between the Timorese and the Indonesian authorities would be a negative development," a U.S. embassy official told AFP.

Man charged with murder in connection with sex-torture case

ELEPHANT BUTTE, New Mexico (AP) — A man has been charged with murder in a case that already has produced charges of kidnapping and sexual torture against a couple, the Albuquerque Journal reported Saturday.

Dennis Ray Yancy, 27, is the first person to be charged with murder in the investigation. He was arrested Friday night and was being held without bond, state police Lt. Greg Richardson said.

In addition to murder, he is also charged with kidnapping, conspiracy and evidence tampering, the paper said.

David Kitchen, FBI special agent in charge for New Mexico, confirmed the arrest is related to the case that involves David Parker Ray and Cynthia Lea Hendy, but he would not elaborate.

Despite the murder charge, FBI agent Doug Beldon said: "We haven't found any bodies." Officials declined to identify Yancy's alleged victim.

Ray, 59, and Hendy, 39, have been charged with numerous crimes, includ-

ing kidnapping, sexual abuse, battery and conspiracy. Two women accused the pair of holding them in chains in separate days-long incidents of torture. They have both pleaded innocent.

The investigation began March 22 when one of Ray's neighbours saw a 22-year-old woman naked and bloody on a road; court papers said she also had a padlocked collar around her neck.

Since then, dozens of FBI agents and federal authorities have combed Ray's home, collecting more than 1,000 pieces of evidence and digging around the property.

Beldon said the investigation has expanded across about 10 states and law officers have been searching Elephant Butte Lake for evidence.

An acquaintance of Ms. Hendy's has said that she told him Ray killed four to six people, mutilated the bodies and dumped them in the lake. Ms. Hendy said other bodies were buried in the desert, the acquaintance said.



Tennis star Andre Agassi said in Hong Kong on April 10 that his marriage to actress Brooke Shields was over. He did not elaborate on the causes of the break-up. The two are shown at the opening of the All-Star Café in Las Vegas on Dec. 14, 1996 (Reuters photo)

Agassi says his marriage with Brooke Shields over

HONG KONG (R) — Andre Agassi said in Hong Kong on Saturday that his marriage to actress Brooke Shields was over.

"We have filed for divorce and we are divorced ... it is over," the normally flamboyant U.S. tennis star told reporters after reaching the final of the \$350,000 Hong Kong Open.

Agassi married Shields — star of the hit U.S. sitcom "Suddenly Susan" — in California in 1997 in a quiet Roman Catholic ceremony.

Witnesses said Shields, then 31, practically sprinted up the steps of the church, almost tripping in

a dress with a 1.5-metre train.

After his marriage, Agassi's game deteriorated, he put on weight and — critics say — became sloppy.

The former World No. 1, winner of three Grand Slam titles, saw his ranking slump to 141. He began a comeback in 1998, ending the year ranked sixth. He is currently 12th.

After he was roundly thrashed at the Australian open in January, speculation mounted that the root of his woes was trouble at home.

Speaking on Saturday after bundling aside German Hendrik

Dreikmann to reach his first ATP final in 1999, the American denied that he had come to Hong Kong to escape the pressures bound to follow the high-profile divorce back home.

"I needed to play more tennis. I will be going to Tokyo after this event to play in the Japan Open," said Agassi, 28, who entered the Hong Kong event after requesting a wild card from the organisers.

He will meet Germany's Boris Becker in Sunday's final.

He and Shields were due to celebrate their second wedding anniversary on

April 19. He did not elaborate on causes of the break-up.

An article printed in the U.S. magazine *Fortune* last month quoted Shields as saying marriage gave her a self-esteem boost.

Not only is her show "Suddenly Susan" running strong in its third season, but Shields has now bagged another show, "Black and White", with Ben Stiller and Robert Downey Jr.

"I feel like I've grown up a great deal in the past few years," she says in the article. "I feel as though I'm really looking towards the future."

Thousands at pro-Jakarta war rally in Timor

VIQUEQUE, East Timor (R) — Thousands of pro-Indonesian East Timorese rallied in a show of force on Saturday as a pro-independence activist was reported shot dead in a clash with security forces.

"This gathering is carried out as a response to terror, intimidation and killing of pro-integration people, by pro-independence people," senior militia commander Eurico Guterres said.

Four militiamen drank the blood of a sacrificed dog as Guterres warned foreign forces to stay out of East Timor.

A few hours earlier the United Nations warned that mounting violence was jeopardising a scheduled ballot on the territory's

future.

Armed with spears, machetes and home-made guns, about 2,500 militiamen from all over the former Portuguese colony gathered in Viqueque, around 90 km east of the capital Dili.

About 1,500 people looked on, a Reuters cameraman said.

This was the second such rally since pro-independence guerrilla leader Xanana Gusmao issued a call to arms nearly a week ago. Jakarta threatened on Friday to return him to prison if he did not retract the call within a week.

The militiamen vowed they were ready for fresh clashes with pro-independence groups, and plan

another rally for Sunday.

Pro-independence activist Antoni Liman was killed on Saturday in a clash with security forces. Ermera, 25 km southwest of Dili, the official Antara news agency reported. Police and military officials could not immediately be contacted for comment or confirmation.

Ermera is a few kilometres from Liquisa, where spiritual leader Bishop Carlos Belo said 25 people were massacred by pro-Jakarta forces on Tuesday.

Belo denied Indonesian reports that only five were killed and demanded autopsy details to confirm the death toll, which others have put as high as 57.

Late on Friday in new

York, U.N. mediator on East Timor Jamsheed Marker said violence was threatening a July ballot on East Timor's future.

"That has to stop. That is a prerequisite. It is something we have told all sides and in particular the Indonesian government," Marker said.

In January, Jakarta suddenly reversed 23 years of staunch opposition to independence for the former Portuguese colony, saying it would be considered if the East Timorese rejected a wide-ranging autonomy deal in a planned direct ballot.

Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 and annexed it the following year in a move not recognised by the United Nations.

Soldiers in discreet control in Niger

NIAMEY (R) — Soldiers who assassinated Niger's president were in discreet control of the west African nation on Saturday, military and other sources said, as the capital remained calm with few obvious signs of a military takeover.

The government described Ibrahim Bare Mainassara's death as "an unfortunate accident" but military sources said that he had been killed by his own guards on Friday morning while preparing for a flight to the airport.

Residents reported no heightened security in the capital on Saturday although all land borders had been ordered closed.

State radio, which earlier announced a month of national mourning, broadcast religious chants.

Prime Minister Ibrahim Assane

said that parliament had been dissolved and political activity suspended.

"In the morning of Friday, an unfortunate accident resulted in the sudden death of the president of the republic," Mayaki told the nation after hours of confusion in the capital.

That version of events remained the only official comment on what happened. The reasons for the killing remained unclear.

Niger, which embraced multi-party politics in the early 1990s after an extended bout of military rule, has been racked by a deep-rooted political crisis that predates Mainassara's own rise to power in a 1996 military coup.

Mayaki said that the present government would stay on until the formation of a government of national unity but while he appeared to have taken interim charge

of the country, official sources said soldiers who carried out the attack were in control.

Some sources said Mayaki had been notified of Mainassara's death by soldiers who asked him to remain at home and await orders. Soldiers had dictated his radio statement, they said.

Officials said Mayaki went to military headquarters to meet top officers before briefing foreign ambassadors.

Niger has a presidential system of government. Under the constitution, which has not been suspended, the prime minister is not technically the head of government and has no power to dissolve parliament. His role is more of a coordinator.

The constitutional successor to the president is the head of the national assembly, Moutari Moussa, who has not appeared in public and has made no statement.

Mainassara's supporters dominated parliament after an opposition boycott of a 1996 parliamentary election.

The opposition was protesting at his disputed election as president earlier in the year when he scrapped the electoral commission and briefly locked up his rivals.

Political tension rose again in February after attacks on polling centres disrupted vote counting in local elections.

The opposition, which had apparently been leading at the time, called for Mainassara's resignation on Thursday after the supreme court ordered poll reruns in many districts.

Military sources and witnesses said that four other people had been killed in Friday's shooting, including Mainassara's chief of personal staff, a bodyguard and a senior regional official.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Clinton describes Bangladesh PM as 'statesman' for peace deal

DHAKA (AFP) — U.S. President Bill Clinton has described Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed as a "statesman" for ending a decades-old bloody insurgency in Bangladesh's south-eastern hills, a report said. In a congratulatory letter to Sheikh Hasina for winning UNESCO's 1998 Houshouet-Boigny peace award, Clinton said: "The world heartily commends your effort ... the selection was fully justified. 'Your efforts leading to the signing of a peace accord to end the 25 years of fighting in the Chittagong Hill Tracts reflect political courage and statesmanship of the highest order.'" Clinton said, according to a report carried by the official BSS news agency. "It is refreshing to see a long-standing conflict brought to a peaceful conclusion through diplomacy in a world that is so often fraught with ethnic strife." Sheikh Hasina and former U.S. Senator George Mitchell were named the winners of the UNESCO award earlier this month. Mitchell helped broker last year's historic Northern Ireland peace accord while Sheikh Hasina in December 1997 signed a landmark peace deal with tribal leaders to end the insurgency.

'One in eight parliamentarians female'

BRUSSELS (R) — One in eight of the world's parliamentarians is a woman, a worldwide parliamentary organisation said on Saturday. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), grouping representatives from 186 national parliaments, told a conference in Brussels that women accounted for 12.7 per cent of 39,618 parliamentarians around the world on April 1. Swedish women led the way with 42.7 per cent representation, with the average for all the Nordic countries 33.3 per cent. This was followed by the Americas with 15 per cent, with Europe, including the Nordic region, and Asia running neck and neck with 13.8 per cent, the IPU said. Only 3.4 per cent of parliamentarians in the Arab world were women, it said, adding that Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Comoros and Djibouti were among more than 10 countries having no women parliamentarians at all.

'Majority of Indians want Vajpayee as PM'

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's battered image got a lift Saturday when an opinion poll suggested that 64 per cent of Indians want him to continue as premier. Respondents who took part in the poll, conducted this week by Outlook magazine in six major Indian cities, said they were "not for political instability." Vajpayee's 13-month-old government is being mocked by its most serious crisis following a rift with its largest ally, the AIADMK, led by maverick politician Jayalalitha Jayaram, over December's sacking of naval chief Admiral Vishnu Bhargava. Most analysts expect the AIADMK will pull its 18 MPs out of the 280-member coalition next week and that the main opposition Congress party, led by Italian-born Sonia Gandhi, will try to cobble together a new government. "The poll showed 38.6 per cent support for the Congress forming a government ... Surprisingly, if the Congress comes to power, only 38.2 per cent feel that Sonia Gandhi should be the prime minister," Outlook said. Fifty-three per cent of respondents felt that Jayalalitha Jayaram was holding the government to "ransom" and 69 per cent said Sonia Gandhi should not form an alliance with her. Outlook gave no details on the number of respondents or its method of survey.

Taliban reject another round of peace talks with opposition

KABUL (AP) — The Taliban refused Saturday to hold another round of talks with their northern-based enemies, later this month in the Turkmenistan capital of Ashgabat, Abdul Haq Muttmain, the Taliban's information minister, dismissed the United Nations sponsored peace talks as a failure saying the opposition has been on the attack on the battlefield since the last round of talks in March also in Ashgabat. He said the Taliban's supreme council will decide whether to continue peace talks with the northern-based alliance, but certainly not this month. "Only our supreme council can decide to resume talks with the opposition. And it has not yet given the permission," he said. Last month, the Taliban and the opposition agreed to form a shared government to restore peace in their war-torn country. They also agreed to meet again in April possibly in Afghanistan. But soon after the talks, fighting started between the two sides on several fronts with each accusing the other of flouting the agreement which was brokered by the United Nations. The opposition says it will not become part of any setup which includes Mullah Mohammed Omar, the supreme leader of the Taliban. The Taliban insist on keeping Omar as Afghanistan's ruler. The Taliban, who rule 90 per cent of the country, are mostly ethnic Pashtuns and Sunni Muslims, while the opposition largely represents Afghanistan's minority groups.

Dissidents use Internet to campaign against China

HONG KONG (AP) — Chinese dissidents and human rights activists formally launched a website on Saturday to promote their campaign for democracy in China and to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the bloody crackdown on the pro-democracy movement. By using the Internet, their petition campaign will bypass the censorship of the Chinese Communist Party, exiled Chinese dissident Wang Dan said in a statement released by organisers at a press conference on Hong Kong. Wang, a leader of the 1989 Tiananmen square pro-democracy protests in Beijing, went to the United States in November after he was freed from a Chinese jail. The campaign, launched in New York earlier this month, is to get about 500,000 signatures on a petition to be delivered to the Chinese government and the United Nations on June 4, the 10th anniversary of the Tiananmen protests. The global petition campaign website has the support of such international human rights groups as Amnesty International, human rights in China, and Human Rights Watch.

Cabinet minister resigns to fight power theft charges

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan's Science and Population Welfare Minister Abida Hussain resigned Saturday to fight charges she stole electricity. "The prime minister has accepted my resignation and now I am free to contest my case," Hussain said in a telephone interview. Hussain, a big landowner and lawmaker in the lower house of parliament or national assembly, was charged with stealing electricity from the state-run agricultural holdings in eastern Punjab province. She has been charged with the theft of power company is on the verge of bankruptcy because of rampant electricity theft, where consumers tamper with the metres to reduce the readings. In an attempt to stop the theft the government enlisted the help of the military who has taken over the power company.



EASTER IN RUSSIA: A Russian Orthodox priest sprinkles holy water on believers and Easter cakes and gifts they brought for a blessing ceremony in downtown Moscow on Saturday. Russians celebrate the Orthodox Easter this weekend (AFP photo)

Apparent attempt on Chechen president's life averted

GROZNY, Russia (AP) — Police on Saturday discovered and safely detonated two bombs that officials said were part of a plot to kill Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov. One of the bombs was found near a square in the town of Staroye Atagi, where Maskhadov gave a speech to thousands of people only hours later. The second bomb was found on a road between Staroye Atagi and Chechnya's capital of Grozny, according to the Interfax news agency. Presidential spokesman Mairbek Vuchagayev said the bombs were intended to kill Maskhadov. If so, the effort would have been the second attempt on Maskhadov's life since mid-March and the fifth in three years.

Maskhadov was a leading rebel commander during Chechnya's 1994-96 war of secession from Russia and won a landslide election victory in January 1997. He now faces severe opposition from several warlords who have accused him of being too friendly with Moscow.

He has also been unable to stem a wave of kidnappings and other crimes that has plagued Chechnya and spilled into neighbouring regions since the war.

Despite the discovery of the two bombs, Maskhadov delivered a 30-minute speech at the rally in Staroye Atagi, where 4,000 city administration officials, Muslim leaders and armed vigilantes units declared their loyalty to him. Another estimated 10,000 supporters

also turned out at the event.

He claimed that secret services from Western countries and other enemies were spreading violence in Chechnya to prevent the creation of a fully independent Chechen state.

"We are going through hard times now. The enemy is within it but it is invisible. We are one nation, we have one religion but there is no accord between us," he said.

Meanwhile, the Interfax news agency reported Saturday that Russian President Boris Yeltsin has expressed a desire to meet with Maskhadov in the near future to discuss controlling violence in and around Chechnya, including a number of bombings and kidnappings in recent months.

But Yeltsin's spokesman,

Dmitry Yakushev, said a great deal of work was needed on both sides before the two men meet. "For the meeting to take place and bear fruit, it must be prepared for very well," Yakushev said Friday.

Interfax also reported that Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov would discuss preparations for the meeting with unspecified officials during a trip to the Caucasus region of North Ossetia on April 17-18.

Moscow has a working relationship with Maskhadov, but it is not eager to give him a forum to assert Chechnya's claims of autonomy. Moscow still considers the mostly Muslim republic part of its territory, and no country has recognised Chechen independence claims.

H. Kong to look into abuse of mainland detainees

HONG KONG (AFP) — The Hong Kong government on Saturday said it was concerned about allegations of abuse of a group of mainland Chinese while in detention here and pledged to investigate complaints. "We are very concerned about the allegations that have been made. Specific complaints formally lodged will be seriously looked into," a spokesman said. "Anyone who feels aggrieved should come forward and provide the authorities with more information about their allegations of abuse."

"Due confidentiality will be accorded," the spokesman said.

A Hong Kong human rights group on Friday released a survey detailing abuses against a group of Chinese illegal immigrants while held in detention here.

Out of 90 respondents to a questionnaire ninety one per cent claimed they were strip

searched, with a reason for the search only given in four of the cases.

Three detainees were forced to strip three times and two were searched twice. One mainlanders was forced to do squats while naked, the survey found.

But the government said none of the Chinese have made formal complaints and urged them to come forward so that their cases can be properly investigated. The mainlanders, who have

all overstayed their Hong Kong visas but claim right of abode here under a landmark court ruling, were rounded up at the end of last month.

The government insists they should return to China to apply for residency through official channels, but they are fighting for the right to remain.

A court ordered immigration authorities to release the overstayers pending the outcome of an appeal hearing in a test case on May 20.

7 acquitted in rape of French tourist

CHANDIGARH, India (AP) — All seven persons, including the grandson of a slain politician, were acquitted Saturday of raping a French tourist after the victim did not show up in court in a northern Indian state, officials said.

After waiting for months for the alleged rape victim to appear, judge Sant Prakash closed the prosecution's case late last year.

On Saturday, the judge said the prosecution had not been able to produce any evidence against the accused. Also, the woman from Lyons, France, did not show up in court

despite several notices.

Last year, the government attorney told the judge that the woman was reluctant to testify against Gurkirat Singh, the grandson of the slain politician, fearing her life would be in danger if she came to India.

Gurkirat Singh, grandson of former Chief Minister Beant Singh of Punjab state, could have received up to 10 years in jail if he had been convicted.

The alleged rape in 1994 caused a sensation in Punjab, where Beant Singh was the highest elected official. The prosecution

case suffered an early blow when the woman's boyfriend refused to identify any of the accused in court, although he said she was raped.

A foreign office official told the court that diplomatic channels could not be used to serve summons on the victim since no treaty exists between India and France for assistance in criminal matters.

The prosecution said that the woman was drinking with friends at a bar in this northern Indian city in 1994 when Gurkirat Singh walked in with six friends and a column of security

guards. The guards were provided by the government since his grandfather was leading a government onslaught against a violent Sikh separatist movement and his family had received death threats.

The guards later chased the woman's car and forcibly took her away, accusing her of carrying drugs. The woman was then allegedly raped by the seven men, including Gurkirat Singh, in a factory, prosecutors said.

Chief minister Beant Singh was killed in a car-bomb explosion triggered by terrorists in 1995.

U.S. Congressman seeks more aid for Cambodia

PHNOM PENH (R) — A U.S. Congressman said on Saturday the United States and the international community should do more to help Cambodia in its fight against "terrible" levels of poverty and malnutrition.

Tony Hall, a Democrat member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Ohio, said he would seek more U.S. humanitarian aid for Cambodia.

"I will be pushing for it (more aid). There's no question that we should be doing more," Hall told a news conference.

"People are living in terrible poverty... The international community can do a much better job in helping this country."

The United States suspended all but humanitarian aid to Cambodia in 1997 after then First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh was ousted by his junior coalition partner and co-premier, Hun Sen.

Washington gave Cambodia \$35 million in aid in the year before Hun Sen's coup and Hall said that figure had now fallen to an "unacceptable" \$12 million a year.

Hall, who has made four visits to famine-stricken North Korea in recent years, said he saw some similarities between that country and Cambodia.

"There's tremendous stunting in both countries but the malnutrition is differ-

ent," he said. "There's acute malnutrition in North Korea. You don't see a lot of acute malnutrition in Cambodia but you see a lot of people living very much on the margin," he said.

U.N. officials call grinding rural poverty Cambodia's silent crisis. Half of all children under five years of age are stunted and 20 per cent suffer from severe malnutrition through chronic poor nutrition and periods of acute food shortage, the United Nations says.

Cambodia's infant mortality rate, average life expectancy and education levels are the worst in the region, according to U.N. figures.

Hall had talks with Prime Minister Hun Sen on his visit and said he was encouraged by the premier's response to the problem. Hun Sen has promised that his government will fight poverty.

Hall also said humanitarian aid should not be linked to political objectives.

Late last month U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell warned Hun Sen that U.S. aid would be at risk if a proposed trial of Khmer Rouge leaders did not measure up to international standards.

Hall said the impact of the 1975-79 period of Khmer Rouge rule, when some 1.7 million people were killed, was a main factor behind today's poverty.

Six killed in Midwest storms

MONTGOMERY, Ohio (AP) — Chain saws and patience have become essential tools as residents begin repairing their lives a day after a tornado killed four people and demolished more than 200 homes in Cincinnati's suburbs.

Two other people were killed in Illinois as powerful storms tore through the Midwest.

Ohio officials were still tabulating the destruction hours after a pre-dawn twister with 320-kph winds carved a narrow, spotty path through affluent subdivisions in Montgomery. Blue Ash and other communities Friday morning.

"Trees, huge trees, looked like some large mower with a rotary blade went through and sheared them all off," said Montgomery Mayor Richard Tuten.

The storm uprooted and snapped trees, downed electric power lines and tore roofs off homes and churches. Houses were smashed into piles of rubble, and shopping centre parking lots were strewn with broken glass.

At least 42 people were treated at hospitals, most with bruises or cuts. Two people were killed in a house, and two in separate car crashes.

One of the victims, a 40-year-old man, was thrown from his car when the wind flipped it over, said Blue Ash police chief Mike Allen. The same gust flipped a tractor-trailer.

The State Emergency Management Agency estimated 200 homes were destroyed in Cincinnati's northeast suburbs. The storm also damaged houses in a

western Ohio county and flipped campers at a dealership near Dayton.

Ohio governor Bob Taft declared emergencies in three counties, a step to make those areas eligible for federal loan assistance. He said the state was providing bottled water, tetanus vaccine and road-clearing help.

"My heart went out to the families who went to bed last night and woke up to this," Taft said. "If there is a positive side to this whole tragedy, it has been the tremendous outpouring of support."

The storms began to intensify Thursday afternoon in states to the west. High winds damaged homes in Indiana, and at least nine suspected tornadoes destroyed homes, flattened barns and uprooted trees in Iowa.

A five-block area in the

Nebraska town of North Bend was ravaged by a tornado, and storms also damaged buildings and downed power lines in Missouri.

In Ashland, Illinois, a community of 1,200, a tornado late Thursday ripped apart 17 mobile homes in a trailer park and killed a 68-year-old woman. A 43-year-old woman died in a mobile home in Cisco, 105 kilometres to the east.

"I was sucked out the door and watched two trailers right in front of me go up in the air," said Louann Judd of Ashland.

George Clemons, 79, who lived by himself in his trailer, came back in the morning drizzle to see what little of his home remained.

"It was just like a bomb went off," he said.

Japan marks anniversary of imperial wedding

TOKYO (R) — Japan's Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko on Saturday celebrated the 40th anniversary of one of this century's most celebrated weddings.

The couple marked the event with a concert at the Imperial Palace attended by about 150 guests, including their three children and their families, an imperial household agency spokesman said.

In April 1959, then Crown

Prince Akihito broke imperial precedent by marrying a commoner, Michiko Shoda, the daughter of a wealthy industrialist.

Their marriage helped alter the nation's and the world's perceptions about the imperial family, which had been etched into the history books by Emperor Hirohito and the legends who worshipped him during World War II as a divinity.

The imperial couple broke with tradition by raising

their three children — Crown Prince Naruhito 39, Prince Akihiro, 33, and Princess Nori, 29 — at home rather than sending them to private tutors outside the palace.

Akihito became emperor in 1989 and his two sons have followed in his footsteps by marrying non-aristocrats in gala weddings full of pomp and pageantry.

Crown Princess Masako, the Harvard educated former diplomat, was expected to

follow the example of Empress Michiko by modernising the throne when she entered the imperial family in 1993.

The 35-year-old Masako emerged from the marriage not as a force of liberalisation, but instead as a demure, prudishly attired figure who walks a regimented three steps behind her husband.

The two have no children, leading to waves of speculation about imperial succession.

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India puts its latest satellite in geo-stationary orbit

BANGALORE, India (AFP) — Indian experts on Saturday successfully moved a telecommunications satellite into a geostationary orbit, officials here said.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), which built the satellite and launched it on April 3 on a European Ariane rocket from French Guiana, said the exercise was carried out at 9.37 am (0407 GMT).

The \$52-million INSAT-2E is expected to reach its destination in about a week, an ISRO spokesman said from the agency's headquarters in this southern city.

The 2.6-tonne satellite, the sixth of its type, developed snags a day after its launch. But ISRO said the minor error was rectified.

The spokesman also said ISRO would deploy the satellite's two antennas, solar array and solar sail by Sunday as it orbited towards

its final location. "All sub-systems are now functioning normally and the satellite is continuously monitored," the spokesman said.

The state-run ISRO has said the latest telecommunications satellite would be followed by a seventh, INSAT-3B, in around six months.

More than half of INSAT-2E's capacity had been sold for \$100 million to the 104-nation Washington-based

consortium Intersat — the first foreign buyer of Indian satellite transponders.

INSAT-2E's footprint covers all of Asia and Australia. It is the most advanced satellite built by ISRO and has a 12-year life.

A similar Indian satellite, INSAT-2D, was abandoned after it was crippled by a power failure in October 1997, three months after its launch. The launch of INSAT-2E was delayed by almost a year.

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Economy high on new government's agenda

THE NEW government of Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh has already scored two points to its credit: First it placed economic issues at the top of its agenda announcing that lack of economic growth, unemployment, poverty, and water shortage are the main issues which the government will shoulder. Second, the prime minister admitted publicly that the Jordanian economy is not only slowing down as we were told before, but is actually retreating. Thus he did not rule out the possibility of negative growth during the past two years and up to this moment.

Aside from these two points, the policy statement of the government as presented to the Parliament for a vote of confidence was not very different from previous government statements, especially as presented in the newspapers. However, it was quite different if watched on the television. The prime minister spoke

with authority projecting determination and willingness to act forcefully and bring about results.

In general, the implied message was that this is a strong government, which has the will to make a difference, and the ability to carry out its plans. What it is promising is not new and has been promised several times in the past, but the way this government will go about these promises, slogans, objectives and policies will be different.

As far as the contents of the policy statements are concerned we find: Stability of the dinar, keeping inflation under control, securing the independence of the judiciary, supporting the Armed Forces, opening up to the institutions of the civil society, dialogue, cracking-down on corruption, protecting national unity, reducing unemployment, alleviating poverty, restoring economic growth, privatisation, transparency, administrative reform, backing the

Palestinian people, reiterating peace strategy but not at any price, a wide open information apparatus, democracy, freedom of expression with responsibility, bettering relations with the Arab World, reducing indebtedness, paying attention to every sector, and reconsidering many laws and situations.

We don't doubt the intentions of the prime minister, his competence or his determination. He enjoys the full confidence and support of the Palace and the people, but for practical purposes, one must ask what are the real options for the government, facing the great challenges it identified in its statement. To point out a desired objective is something, and to have the means to achieve it is something else. Good intentions and determination are important but not enough.

In order for the Jordanian economy to take off, it needs a large

Sunday's Economic Pulse



Dr. Fahed Fanek

amount of capital. Domestic savings are hardly enough to compensate for the depreciation of the fixed productive assets in the country, estimated at JD600 million a year. Utilisation of local capital will also translate itself into attrition of foreign currencies and depletion of the Central Bank

reserves. Jordan needs to fuel economic growth by capital from external sources such as expatriates remittances, foreign aid and grants, exports of goods and services, and Arab and foreign investments.

The practical and realistic options of the government are: To secure jobs in the Gulf states, bring the local labour market under control, attract more grants from abroad, encourage exports, promote tourism, and privatisation as means to lure investors.

Too much is expected from the new government, its options are limited, the space for manoeuvring is very narrow, the mission is extremely difficult. But it is not impossible.

Hopefully the government will not be frustrated, and the people will not be disappointed.

McCarthyism revisited?

YESTERDAY'S COMMUNIQUE from the so-called "anti-normalisation committee" of the professional associations, castigating the Al Fawanees Theatre Group for inviting an Arab Israeli to participate in the Amman International Festival for Independent Theatre (and we emphasise "independent") is an appalling demonstration of Jordanian support to Arabs who live under in diverse circumstances not of their making, and who nonetheless aspire to promote Arab culture whenever possible.

We find it amazing that the committee or any one of its members could be so audacious as to publicly suggest that the theatre festival is "unpatriotic" because an Arab of Israel participates with a Palestinian troupe, or because the non-profit festival must rely on "foreign funding" to put on a week-long production which Jordanians can attend for free. Maybe the professional associations should review their brand of patriotism. A true patriot would show more respect for both the law of his homeland and his culture.

Which authority has granted the professional associations the right to dictate where, when and under what circumstances another Arab will exercise his right to free expression and promote his culture?

The extent to which the professional associations and their so-called anti-normalisation committee are allowed to vilify and slander those they accuse of "normalising" relations with Israel and of being part of the international "Zionist conspiracy" has grown ridiculous in the past year. The announcement last week that they will soon release a "black list" of "normalisers" is frightening and lays the groundwork for a black moment of Jordanian-style McCarthyism.

In their zealotry, the professional associations seem to have lost sight of a few basic principles: First, that Jordan is a democracy, peace is the law of the land, and accordingly each person has the right to pursue or reject normalisation; second, that slander is actually illegal under the penal code; third, that castigating an Arab Israeli working with a Palestinian theatre group serves neither the Palestinian cause in the region nor the Arab cause on the world stage; fourth, that a boycott, as we all know by now, is not a productive form of socio-political discussion; and finally, that the associations' mandates are to actually serve their professions, instead of hunting down "normalisers."

Perhaps the professional associations' latest activities are an expression, albeit an alarming one, of nostalgia for long-past glory days when they truly were influential and practised in the art of politics. But witch-hunting is not politicking. It is what it was in the United States in the 1950s: pure, destructive pettiness.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Mahmoud Rimawi said the overwhelming vote of confidence for the government was expected, as Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh is at the heart of parliamentary, political and party work. Also, most of the current ministers are "familiar faces," who have administrative experience and represent various areas of the Kingdom, added Rimawi. Rawabdeh's direct way of handling the country's problems and his keenness to launch a dialogue makes his government a model of a new democratic life, he said. The new government should be given enough time to achieve its pledges, in line with Rawabdeh's notable remark that the policy statement was only a statement of general intent and not an executive programme, said the writer. The vote of confidence given to the government was only the beginning, and it will be conditional upon many factors as the Cabinet's performance is monitored in its efforts to tackle vital issues like unemployment, poverty, water and public freedoms. Rimawi expressed his hope that the government will meet its declared objectives, especially since Rawabdeh is close to the public and is aware of the obstacles facing people in the streets.

Al Ra'i's Taher Adwan said all indications were that the improving relations between Amman and Damascus was a Syrian decision and a Jordanian desire. Although there are various analyses on the reasons behind the improvement of joint relations, it is wrong to say the reason is the absence of the late King Hussein, argued Adwan, though, of course, Syrian President Hafez Assad's participation at King Hussein's funeral helped open a new page in relations. Overcoming problems facing the success of such relations, will help shrink the distance between the two leaderships, according to Adwan. Arab peoples nowadays are aware of the importance of Arab cooperation to meet dangers and solve economic and developmental problems. Jordanians and Syrians feel that stable and strong relations based on mutual respect will help achieve common interests, said Adwan.



Truth is dying in the ruins of a silent capital

By Robert Fisk

IF THERE are lies, damned lies and statistics, the Kosovo war has now moved into damned lies.

Just a week ago, we had the Serbs claiming that the Albanians — far from being "ethnically cleansed" — were setting fire to their own homes.

Now we have NATO claiming that the Serbs of Pristina — far from being bombed by NATO — were blowing up their own homes. In the centre of this empty, silent city, you might be forgiven for thinking that the world has gone mad.

The Serbs are spending much of their time insisting that the tens of thousands of Albanians who have palpably disappeared from the capital of Kosovo are merely hiding from NATO bombs.

In which case, why is every house empty, every Albanian street deserted, every Albanian shop smashed and plundered and daubed with Serb graffiti? A Serbian woman crying yesterday in a Pristina cemetery hit by NATO on Wednesday in air strikes heavier than any before on the Kosovo capital — Vuk Brankovic.

Why did the fearful group of non-Serb refugees we saw at the disused railway tracks shamble in exhaustion and fear through the city, a mass of filthy clothes and old sacks and haggard faces, a live reenactment of Schindler's List? Why did lights still burn in broken homes, and front doors bang in the wind and why were the contents of the Albanian chemist's shop strewn over the pavement on the edge of town? Then we have NATO's brutal air raid on Tuesday night and Wednesday morning. It killed at least 10 civilians, it destroyed the post office, the largest bank in town and a whole row of civilian homes. One bomb crater had totally erased a single-storey house. At least two craters were 30-feet-deep and the bomb that hit the post office had brought part of the building crashing to the ground. When I talked to Serbs who live in the centre of Pristina — alone and in many cases almost too angry to speak to a citizen of a NATO country — they all gave detailed descriptions of the night of air raids.

When Valentina Jovanovic came to the door of her house in the capital, she was still in a state of shock, drawing heavily on a cigarette, her fingers shaking, as frightened of her own voice as she was angry to find an Englishman outside her home. "They bombed first at 11 o'clock. Then they came back at 1 o'clock. Then again at

three this morning. They bombed and bombed and bombed. Why?" A few hours later, Air Commodore David Wilby told a NATO briefing that in Pristina "NATO has certainly not caused the widespread and random damage, which we believe has been caused by Serb forces."

But while it is true that — at the start of its air bombardment — NATO attacked exclusively military targets, the American-European alliance is now hitting civilians. And I believe that Valentina Jovanovic was telling me the truth in Pristina. I do not believe Air Commodore Wilby was telling us the truth in Brussels.

Only aerial bombing could have pulverised the centre of the city in so shocking a way. Only missiles or air-fired ordnance could have gouged such craters into the ruins. No Serb — however devious — could have created this disgraceful scene in just a few hours, priming the entire Serb population of the area to tell every journalist an identical story.

Either NATO made a terrible mistake in Pristina or, egged on perhaps by its Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) guerrilla allies, it committed a terrible deed. No wonder the Serbs — who brought journalists to Kosovo to see the ruins but allowed them to walk unaccompanied through this part of the town — were so willing to have this shameful scene filmed.

If ever the Serbs needed to find a reason for the Albanian exodus — other than the real reason which was no doubt murder and intimidation and dispossession — NATO has now provided them with it. "The loyal Albanians stayed, only the disloyal left," a middle-aged man explained on the Corso near the Grand Hotel in Pristina.

A likely story. Who, in heaven's name, are the loyal Albanians? The old man I found with a battered typewriter and a bag of dirty clothes hobbling past the post office, mumbling his desire to go to Skopje? The ghostly occupants of all those bombed homes east of Pristina? The phantom Albanians who, according to Serb city officials, will have to wait a few days to collect their pensions now that NATO has destroyed a local welfare office? What Albanian would ever choose to return here now? On the way to Pristina, amid the fields of vines and cherry trees and the blossom-smothered farmyards, the Serb tanks were hard to see. It took me all of five seconds to spot a T-72 in a farm scarcely 20-feet from me, so well had the hay and branches been piled around the tracks and hull. Only the end of

the gun barrel glinting in the late afternoon sun gave the game away. In one small village, the Yugoslav army had parked its trucks beside cottages, on lawns, alongside barns, within the first trees of a great forest. Every house has its tank, I thought.

And I doubted very much if the NATO pilots were going to win this lot out. In one great valley, it was only when I was travelling beside a river that I saw the anti-aircraft guns dug in beside the banks, barrels on a flat trajectory, camouflage netting pulled over ammunition bunkers. This was not an army that was ready to die. Yet by the time we reached Pristina, there was little to hide.

We overtook two T-72 tanks thrashing down the highway in clouds of brown dust past burned-out homes and shops, their crews — each man with his head encased in that Russian-style rubber helmet so familiar from every Soviet war film — giving us the three-fingered Serb victory sign. Trucks and jeeps and armoured vehicles hummed along the highway. The troops waved and shouted and, at one hillside bar where a platoon sat in the late afternoon drinking, a soldier pulled the opener on a beer can and sprayed the contents in a circle against the sunlight. We have won, the message meant. We have conquered. Kosovo is ours.

But is it? Every night, the local Serbs told us, the KLA came back. Every night there was shooting.

Over all of this scene of frightening desolation — the very emptiness a terrible witness to the suffering of the Albanians — hung thick clouds of black smoke. NATO had totally destroyed the oil plant outside Pristina. When I passed it, the 40-foot flames were so bright they hurt my eyes.

A direct hit. Like the NATO bombs that hit the very centre of Pristina.

The Serb version of a direct hit — and the exodus of Pristina's Albanian population is just that — is awesome and wicked. And NATO has — so far — killed only a fraction of the civilians whom the Serbs have mowed down. But it is now increasing its cull: the bombing of civilian homes at Aleksinac has now cost seven lives, Pristina's toll may reach twelve if two of the seriously wounded die. As the very same Air Commodore Wilby intoned a few days ago, "this is not a game of cricket." All too true — because there are fewer rules every day.

— The Independent

Letters to the editor

Our very own time zone

ON BEHALF of everyone (that I have recently spoken to) and myself, I would like to express my disappointment at the government's decision not to move the clocks forward this summer. I have scrutinised the merits of this decision time and again and I have yet to come up with a viable reason in support of such a move.

In retrospect, (and in addition to every child's perception of long summer days) the merits of longer daylight hours in the evening have their obvious advantages, of which, some are as follows:

First: It is a statistically proven fact that longer daylight hours in the evening are a large contributor to the reduction of road accidents.

Secondly: It is unquestionable that there are savings in energy through lower consumption in household electricity — hence the term "daylight savings."

Thirdly: We are a Middle Eastern country that should follow Middle Eastern time zones and not become a central European time zone (CET) country.

What the government has done is contradictory to the laws of time. For example, if we were to travel West, say to the West Bank, we would have to put our watches forward by one hour. Yet if we were to travel even further then we would have to put our watches back again. This basically defies the "theory" of time zones where we put our watches back when travelling West and forward when travelling East.

The only conclusion I have been able to come up with in support of not changing to summer time is that in line with new governmental measures to pull the country out of a recession, our government has decided on a new radical (and yet to be heard-of) monetary policy that can be basically summarised as follows: "Income generated by hospitals (due to a higher percentage of car accidents this summer) would be channelled from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Tourism in order to promote Jordan as a country entering the Millennium with its own time zone."

I urge the government to reconsider its position and put the clocks forward now — as this government does not have any excesses in hard currency reserves to spend on energy fuels that will not be saved this summer by not putting the clocks forward.

Kamil Nader
Amman
(Independent Time Zone)
Jordan

A waste of time

I WAS reading your article "Daylight Savings: Blessing or Curse" (JT, March 25) on the Internet (I'm in Seattle, Washington). To say the least I was shocked, irritated and mostly confused by the government's decision to abolish it. I have several comments and questions.

Why was the Ministry of Energy wasting its energy and budget conducting this study in the first place? At least 70 other countries in the world observe daylight saving. Most of the remaining countries don't use this system because they are at lower altitudes so the daylight hours are similar during every season. It has been proven that energy use and the demand for electricity for lighting our homes is directly connected to when we go to bed and when we wake up. The odds of us being right in not using it (daylight savings) and the rest of the world wrong are pretty slim.

How could the ministry justify not using this system by saying we would only be saving less than one per cent in energy costs? Is the ministry's budget in such good shape that we're now aiming for savings that are over a certain percentage? The term "saving" means money saved. How could we not see this as something positive regardless of the amount?

The government's decision to adopt this policy could not have come at a more critical time. While the rest of the world is making the least amount of system and policy changes possible in preparation for Y2K and are spending resources figuring out how to make the Y2K transition as smooth as possible our Ministry of Energy is conducting a study about daylight saving. Does that mean that all the potential problems that we might be faced with on December 31, 1999 at midnight have been resolved and are planned for? Let's hope so.

Even if we were to ignore all the above isn't the simple fact that we all look forward to the longer days enough reason to keep it? More time for the kids to play outside and more time for families to do things together after work. We all love those longer warmer days. The government has decided to take one of the few free luxuries we have away because the savings aren't enough?

I suggest we do not waste our time reinventing the wheel on issues that have been extensively researched by others. All the information on daylight saving is just one click away... the Internet. I suggest the ministry utilise this valuable resource.

Lisa Ojeh
Washington State
U.S.

Melissa's mayhem

A new era in computer viruses has been ushered in by Melissa

By Kurt Kleiner and Matt Walker

A NEW CHAPTER in the history of computer viruses has opened. For the first time, a rogue programme has taken full advantage of the Internet to infect tens of thousands of computers worldwide in just a few days. The virus, called Melissa, has already spawned several "copycat" programmes. Some experts fear that conventional countermeasures won't be able to blunt the threat posed by this new breed. "I would not be surprised if in a couple of months they figure out how to make a virus that propagates not in days, but in hours," says Steve White of IBM's Thomas J. Watson Research Center in Hawthorne, New York.

Melissa is a "macro" virus. These cause a disproportionate amount of havoc and exist as small programmes,

called macros, that can be added to documents created by software such as Word, Microsoft's word-processing package. As more than 100,000 computer users have already found to their cost, Melissa arrives by e-mail hidden within a Word file that contains a list of pornographic websites. If the recipient opens the document without disabling the macro function, the virus alters Word's security settings so that warnings about disabling macros won't be displayed in future — a trick that renders the user vulnerable to further attacks.

Melissa then looks for Microsoft's Outlook organiser programme and sends copies of itself to the first 50 contacts in the Outlook e-mail address book. At various times, it deposits a quote from The Simpsons TV show into Word documents.

Macro viruses that propagate by e-mail have been seen before. But

Systems hit by the virus reportedly included NATO computers involved in the war against Yugoslavia.

Melissa is the first to use a popular e-mail programme to spread like wildfire. In doing so last week, it clogged major e-mail gateways. Systems hit by the virus reportedly included NATO computers involved in the war against

Yugoslavia.

A New Jersey man, Christopher Smith, has already been charged with releasing Melissa. But hard on its heels has come a virus called Papa, which lurks in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet file. It works in much the same way, except it also repeatedly tries to contact certain Internet addresses, effectively disabling the user's Net connection.

According to Nick Fitzgerald, an antivirus consultant based in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, there are two further copycats — Marauder and Syndicate.

Companies specialising in antivirus programmes have written software patches that disable Melissa and Papa, and made them available on their websites for downloading. But White and his colleagues at IBM argue that this approach is too slow to deal with fast-reproducing viruses.

IBM has pioneered the Digital Immune System, which it hopes to release in about a year. This will connect customers over the Net with a central computer. When a customer's computer detects an anomaly that might be a new virus, it will automatically ship the code to the central computer, which will figure out a way to detect it, then send the information to everyone on the network.

Some antivirus experts remain sceptical about the Digital Immune System's chances of success. But if it does work as advertised, it should be more than a match for Melissa and its imitators.

"Melissa and Papa are exactly the kind of things that would play to the immune system's strengths," says Fitzgerald. "It could detect and deal with fast-spreading network threats in real time."



Alleged Melissa virus creator Christopher Smith at the courthouse where he is being arraigned in Freehold, New Jersey (Reuters photo)

Tragedy of '48 through the eyes of ordinary Palestinians

"On the Hills of God"
Ibrahim Fawwal
Black Belt Press, 1998,
JD12

IBRAHIM FAWWAL is a professor of film and literature at the University of Alabama and has an academic and professional record in the field of filmmaking, which accounts for the remarkable cinematic narration in this book, which also happens to be his first novel.

"On the Hills of God" is probably the first novel that depicts the tragedy of the 1948 war from the Palestinian point of view. Fawwal begins his story one year before the Zionist invasion in order to present a comprehensive overview of a fully functional and thriving Palestinian society, and to invalidate claims that the Zionist came to an unpopulated and arid land.

The story takes place in Adrallah, a small town where the majority are Christian cohabiting peacefully with Muslims and Jews. Fawwal sees the development of the tragic situation through the eyes of Yousif, a Christian teenager and son of the town's most renowned doctor. Yousif lives in a happy and sheltered household, full of hopes to continue his education in the United States and to marry his beloved Salwa. In June 1947, however, Yousif encounters the first event that was to spell doom for his country; the U.N. resolution to partition Palestine.

At first, the people of Adrallah are sceptic and play down the grave impact of this resolution. Fawwal draws a bitter parallel between their stance and that of Amin, Yousif's Muslim friend, who did not predict that his arm would be amputated because it was broken. No one ever predicted that they would be expelled from their homes as a result of the resolution.

From that point, Yousif witnesses a series of tragedies that shatter his dreams of success, putting him at the mercy of an international community that plotted against the Palestinian people and deprived them of the right to

determine their own fate.

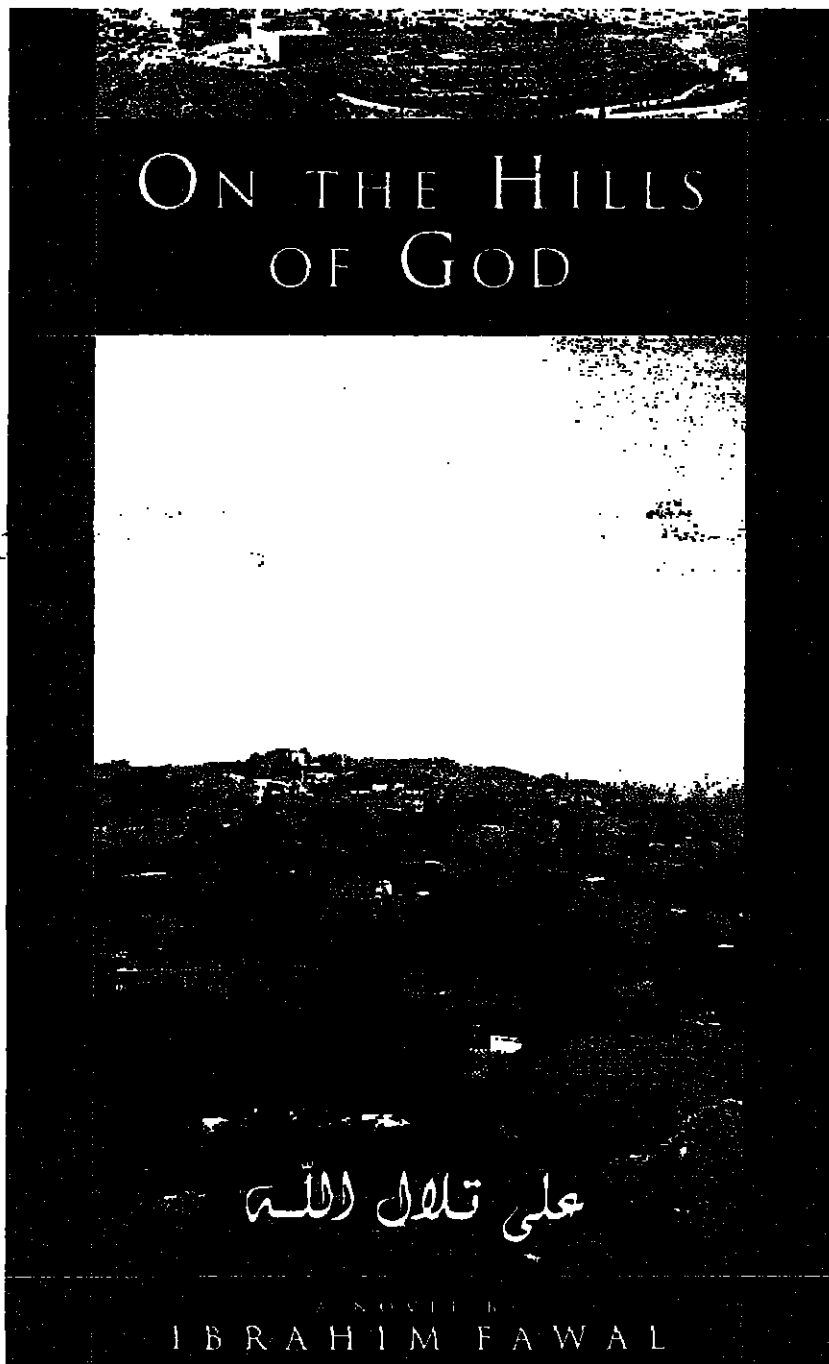
Fawwal's treatment is very personal, yet he remains candid and fair. He did not only incriminate the international community; instead, he focused on the immediate friction that took place in Adrallah's society that turned against the Jewish inhabitants and against each other. Yousif's family represents the rare specimen that tried to preserve their pacifist values. Yousif's father refuses to donate money that was collected to build the first hospital in Adrallah to the fighters to buy arms. Instead of looking for other sources for funding, the town's people accuse him of stealing and channel all their efforts to force him to give them the money. Yousif is also the first to suggest that a delegation is sent to negotiate with the Zionists, but his ideas fall on deaf ears.

Despite all this, Fawwal returns at the end of the novel to assert two important facts: Palestinians were scapegoats who never had the means to save their country, and the Zionists did not want a peaceful resolution but a complete evacuation of Palestine. Yousif finally reaches these conclusions a year after the resolution, on his first evening in Amman after he lost his home and Salwa, and vows to bring both of them back.

Fawwal is a perfectionist. He takes his time in describing the events and sees their development through to the last detail. This is especially clear in the last two chapters where he literally journeys with the Palestinian deportees from their homes to the Jordanian borders, and describes even the most gruesome details: the rotting bodies, and the displaced people having to drink urine to stay alive. This novel has excellently preserved the detailed and intimate truth of the personal suffering of Palestinians; a truth which cannot be found in history books or other novels on the same topic.

The book was made available to the Jordan Times courtesy of the Philadelphia bookshop

Dima Hamdan



'Death on the Nile' runs foul of censors

By Hala Boncompagni
Agence France Presse

AGATHA CHRISTIE'S best-selling mystery "Death on the Nile" had a close shave last month from Egyptian censors amid a crackdown on hundreds of foreign and Arabic books here, publishers and book salesmen say.

They suspect the censors were responding to a taboo on religious and sexual matters in Egypt's conservative society, but complained they had received no guidelines or explanations.

Although "Death on the Nile" was eventually allowed to remain on the bookshelves, the decision to put the novel under censorship review stirred a mystery of its own.

"I can only guess that someone at the censor's office saw the Christie title and was concerned that it could be linked to Islamic militants," Michael Zaig, the bookshop manager at American University in Cairo (AUC), told AFP.

The authorities may have feared the book's title recalled the spate of attacks on tourists in the 1990s, even though it is about European expatriates trying to solve a murder among their own on a Nile cruise decades ago.

Seventy other books were not so lucky and banned outright, AUC publishers said.

These include the Penguin English-language edition of the Koran, philosopher-poet Gibrán Khalil Gibrán's classic "The Prophet," romance writer Danielle Steele's book "Palomino" and Vladimir Nabokov's "Invitation of a Beige Lady."

Milan Kundera's "Unbearable Lightness of Being" was reviewed for nearly five months before the censors approved it Tuesday.

These works either focused on religion or sexual matters. Egyptian law prohibits publications that undermine religion, blaspheme Islam, harm government interests, or are sexually charged.

"All this is so frustrating because

we never really know why a book is called for review or even why it is banned. There are no guidelines," Zaig said.

AUC Press Director Mark Linz said the crackdown began after AUC, bowing to pressure from the national press, dropped French writer Maxime Rodinson's book "Mohammed," a biography of the Muslim prophet.

In December "Al Khubz Al Hafi" (For Bread Alone) by Moroccan author Mohammed Shukri was put aside after the AUC Arab Studies Department received anonymous complaints over the book's passages of explicitly sexual nature.

Linz said 450 books were requested for review in the past nine months.

Officials at the censor's office were unable to provide comment despite numerous phone calls from AFP seeking explanations.

Zaig and other book specialists in Egypt said that employees at the ministry of culture's censor office are not qualified enough to determine what books are "harmful" to Egypt's conservative society.

Egyptian publisher Mahdi Mustafa of Dar Sina publishing house blasted the book banning on a handful of "ignorant" individuals who lack the culture needed to appreciate the true wealth of books.

"There is no (organised official) censorship over books but there are individuals who volunteer complaints to the authorities like in the McCarthy era in the United States," said Mustafa.

The authorities then feel compelled to crack down.

More than 20 books published by Dar Sina have been banned by the authorities since 1978, including one by Cairo University Professor Hamed Abu Zeid criticising the laws of inheritance under Islam.

Abu Zeid was accused of apostasy and ordered by the Egyptian supreme court to divorce his wife for allegedly undermining Islam in his book. The couple have been living in exile in the Netherlands.

ABBA celebrates 25 years of disco magic

By Sarah Toms
Reuters

"WATERLOO" may have been the song that catapulted the Swedish band ABBA to international fame in 1974 when the super troupers won the Eurovision Song Contest — but now revival is "the name of the game."

Twenty five years and 350 million records later, ABBA has lost none of its disco magic. Although the four members went their separate ways in the early 1980s, their hits are never far from the dance floor and will soon be back on the shelves in a box set wrapping in 28 original A and B sides — all of their singles.

There is also a new stage production playing in London's West End that brings the band's songs to life.

The two-girl-two-boy band took the world by storm with "Waterloo" when they stepped onto the stage at the Brighton Dome in southern England in April 1974 in silver platform boots and shiny polyester outfits.

The intervening years have been kind to guitarist and songwriter Bjorn Ulvass. Bearded and a little heavier, his resemblance to co-writer Benny Andersson is even stronger than it was 25 years ago.

He still has fond memories of the start of ABBA's meteoric rise.

"The first is coming to Brighton and

'They burst onto the scene like an explosion in a polyester factory, reaching a new level of cool in the decade fashion forgot'

never having been there before and being photographed on the beach by a few Swedish papers only, thinking we only had the chance of perhaps becoming top 10 in the competition and dreaming about being in the top five because that would boost our careers," Bjorn said.

"We were a group from Sweden, a little known, but winning was absolutely amazing. Then the next day the first Rolls Royce came to pick us up to take us to Top of the Pops. That was great for this little Swedish group. I can tell you."

Both kitsch and camp, ABBA took its title from the names of its members — Agnetha was married to Bjorn and

Benny was married to Anni-Fryd.

They burst onto the scene like an explosion in a polyester factory, reaching a new level of cool in the decade fashion forgot.

Bjorn, now dressed in a sedate black suit, couldn't have been further from the flares of yesteryear.

"We just wanted to be outrageous, that's all," he said. "We thought we had to be more outrageous than anyone else to be seen. There was never any plan that this was going to be our image, the kitsch, as we really suffered for that later on because we weren't taken seriously mainly for the fact that we were wearing such strange clothes," Bjorn says he

sometimes cringes when he thinks back on the outfits.

"It was fun — that's all it was. But then you look at the latter half of our career and we didn't look like that any more but people have forgotten that," he said.

Bjorn says it was the songs — and not the image — that have given ABBA its enduring legacy.

"The two girls together, Agnetha and Frida, have a unique sound. But also the fact that we had so many hits in the seventies, perhaps more than any group around that time, means that they live on and were taken as examples of the seventies all the time."



"If the group had one hit they couldn't revive it. So what they are reviving is a catalogue of songs. That's the only explanation I have... I'm just hoping that someone from outside will tell me why. No one has yet." The music goes on and on and on...

ABBA's sunny optimism has led to steady sales since 1974, including 15 million copies for 1992's "ABBA gold" alone. ABBA songs appeared on the soundtrack of two popular Australian films in the early nineties — "Muriel's Wedding" and "The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert."

There are numerous homages to ABBA — from tribute bands such as Australia's Bjorn Again and Sweden's Arrival to Erasure's 1992 release "ABBA-esque" and the bubblegum pop of Britain's steps, who on the eve of the Millennium are belting out seventies-style hits with a nineties tilt.

Bjorn says they are just paying their respects.

"I think it's strictly tribute — not parody as far as I'm concerned. I choose to see it that way, that they were brought up on ABBA and that they're doing this rather because they like us, more than that they want to do a parody," he said.

The group and the marriages split

about 17 years ago but fans still hold out for a reunion. Bjorn laughed when he was asked the inevitable question.

"I see it as highly unlikely but then again there might be something out there that might make us want to do it. But I just don't see what that would be," he said.

Frida had some singing success but now, married to a German prince, is an environmental activist. Agnetha, married several times, had brief fame with an acting and solo career in Sweden but now lives as a recluse on an island near Stockholm.

Although it looks unlikely that the band will get back together, the new stage production is doing its best to fill the gap. Benny and Bjorn, who worked together on Tim Rice's musical "Chess," have collaborated once again on "Mamma Mia."

The musical had its premiere on April 6 at London's Prince Edward Theatre.

Written by the award-winning playwright Catherine Johnson it uses the group's songs to tell the tale of the relationship between a mother and her daughter.

Johnson said writing a musical that would lend itself to the songs was no easy task.

"When I first started looking at the songs I was surprised at how much more profound the lyrics were than I remembered," she said.

Saudi unemployment more than doubles in six years

RIYADH (AFP) — Unemployment among Saudi Arabia's potential workers has more than doubled since 1993, a senior academic in the kingdom said Saturday.

Ghazi Madani, head of the King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah, said unemployment among the kingdom's active population had risen from 12 per cent in 1993 to 27 per cent in 1999.

Over the same period, an extra 700,000 nationals

joined the workforce of 9.2 million, Madani said, quoted by the Al Itissadiya newspaper.

Expatriates account for about a third of Saudi Arabia's total population of 18 million, but are not included in the figures since they must leave the country if they lose their job.

Last year the Saudi economy contracted 10.8 per cent, while the budget deficit ballooned to \$12.2 billion, according to official figures.

Oil revenues plummeted 34.8 per cent leading the government to raise loans in the private sector including from banks. At the same time measures were taken to cut foreign payments and trim spending.

In December, Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz warned "the age of abundance is over... We must all get used to a new lifestyle that does not rely entirely on the state."

Latin America faces continued slowdown in 1999 — IADB

PARIS (R) — Latin America will face further economic slowdown and may be hit by new outbreaks of financial turmoil this year, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) has warned.

Financial crises originating in Asia and Russia cut Latin America's growth by half to 2.5 per cent in 1998 from 5.3 per cent in 1997, and the outlook for 1999 is grim, the bank said in its annual report.

"It is going to be a difficult year, with less growth than last year," IADB President Enrique Iglesias told reporters.

Brazil, the region's powerhouse, faces severe recession as it battles with a currency crisis since devaluing in January, but Iglesias said the government was taking the right steps to deal with its massive deficit.

"I am very confident that these measures will stabilise the currency at a reasonable level," Iglesias said.

Slower growth, expansionary monetary policies and low interest rates in the industrialised nations should prompt a recovery of capital flows to emerging markets, auguring a more benign financial environment for Latin America, the bank said.

But it warned that "the possibility of new eruptions of instability cannot be dismissed," including sharp declines in the U.S. equity markets.

Reduced world economic growth will also keep commodity prices depressed, posing a big challenge for several Latin American countries as they strive to hold on to hard-gained economic stability, the bank said.

Still, Latin America is better equipped to defend itself now, Iglesias said.

Despite world financial turmoil, compounded by natural disasters caused by the El Nino current and hurricane Mitch, the region grew faster than the

world average in 1998, and stuck to its commitment to open markets and fiscal reform.

Governments kept inflation under control at less than 10 per cent on average, with the exceptions of Venezuela (37 per cent) and Ecuador (40 per cent) both of which were badly hit by falling oil prices.

Export revenues in Chile, once Latin America's showcase economy, fell 14 per cent, or nearly three per cent of output, due mainly to lower copper prices.

Chile was still the fastest growing major economy in the region last year, with five per cent growth in gross domestic product (GDP), followed by Mexico (4.6 per cent) and Argentina (4.5 per cent). Brazil grew only 0.5 per cent and Venezuela 0.3 per cent, the IADB said.

With massive liquidations of positions in emerging markets after Russia's default shook investor confidence, capital flows to Latin America fell off and the cost of money doubled, with spreads hitting 900 basis points.

Total capital inflows in Latin America fell to \$64 billion in 1998 from \$79 billion the year before, the IADB said.

International reserves fell in the region by \$19 billion, and several countries lost 10 per cent or more of their end-1997 stock of foreign exchange reserves, including Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela.

Other repercussions were higher domestic interest rates, rising public sector deficits, tighter fiscal policies, and falling stock indexes, which typically fell between 30 and 50 per cent at the peak of the turbulence, the 1998 report said.

Unemployment rose in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela, but not in Argentina.

The IADB responded to the crisis last year by increasing lending to the region to a record \$10 billion, including emergency loans granted to countries facing particular financial difficulties at a higher than normal interest rate.

Meanwhile, IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus said here that Latin American countries have strongly resisted the effects of recent global financial turmoil partly because they avoided the mistakes made in many Asian countries.

Latin America "has shown a strong capacity, and in some cases a quite astonishing capacity, to hit back and to bounce back from this crisis," the International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief told a seminar.

While crony capitalism in Asia meant that it was often difficult to distinguish where the government ended and the private sector began, "Latin America has been able to make this distinction clearly," Camdessus said.

"Chile has been especially innovative and has very much played the role of a role model" in this respect as the region has moved to reform its economies in recent years, Camdessus said.

Globalisation and opening markets had generally positive effects worldwide, but there were also downsides, "which perhaps were not seen or were perhaps underestimated," Camdessus added.

Highly sophisticated new financial instruments and technology generated "huge capital flows and investment flows to and from emerging markets" but investors were guilty of "frivolous risk evaluation," Camdessus said.

He also warned that "there is no government anywhere in the world that does not show a degree" of vulnerability to external pressures.

European Union urges developing nations to keep up trade liberalisation efforts

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — European Union (EU) Trade Commissioner Leon Brittan has urged developing countries to forge ahead with trade liberalisation and not to be deterred by the Asian economic crisis.

Brittan stressed that a new round of global trade negotiations under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) was the best way to spur trade and growth, as well as minimise the risk of protectionism.

Asian countries had benefited in the past from trade liberalisation and should not block further progress despite the regional financial crisis, he told a news conference.

"Don't be put off by what's happening in the last couple of years," he said. "Put those things right but don't throw the baby out with the bathwater."

"Asia can take off again but this will crucially depend on the policies adopted by governments," he added. "It will not recover the growth rates of the past just by internal development. You have everything to gain from further liberalisation."

Brittan noted that the economic crisis had prompted some Asian countries to impose higher tariffs.

Malaysia has implemented a broad range of import restrictions including an across-the-board 1.5 per cent rise in tariffs since October 1997, bringing its weighted average tariff to about 9.5 per cent.

It has also set a high level of protection for the automobile industry through tariffs up to 300 per cent, import quotas, discriminatory excise taxes and local content requirements.

"We regret that and hope it will change," Brittan said.

The EU trade commissioner said the new round of WTO talks, known as the Millennium Round, was the best way to allow each country to pursue its priorities and balance its interests.

"We are talking years of talks, it's not instant liberalisation. The developing world has nothing to fear. It cannot be coerced. It has its own agenda to put on the table. There is no obligation to accept what you don't like," he stressed.

Trade ministers scheduled to meet in Seattle at the end of November are expected to launch the new round — the ninth since the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade was set up after World War II.

In a speech at a luncheon hosted by the EU Business Council here, Brittan warned

that restrictions may "act as a brake on economic growth."

He said "Restrictions and other obstacles deny to domestic industry itself access not only to raw materials but to key enabling technologies."

Brittan said the new round of WTO talks would allow trade policies to move towards a "mutual elimination of obstacles towards a vicious circle of mutual protectionism."

The EU was prepared to negotiate tariff access to the new round without any "free-trade areas," he added.

China, U.S. sign farm trade pact

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States and China on Saturday signed an agreement on agricultural trade issues and reaffirmed their desire to see China join the World Trade Organisation (WTO) as soon as possible.

The farm deal was hailed as a highlight of President Bill Clinton's meeting this week with Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji. It was signed by U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky and Chinese minister for foreign trade Shi Guangsheng.

"This agreement removes unfair trade barriers to U.S. wheat, meat, citrus and poultry and signifies a new era in our bilateral agricultural relationship, one that is based on sound science and the mutual benefits of open markets," Barshefsky said in a statement.

In a joint statement released by the White House, Clinton and Zhu said the United States and China had made "significant progress" toward their common goal of securing China's early entry into the WTO.

"The United States strongly supports the accession of the People's Republic of China to the WTO in 1999," the statement said.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman hailed the deal as "a fundamental breakthrough for American agriculture."

"China's agreement to lift these long-standing and contentious barriers to our grain, citrus and meat could have significant benefits, permitting greatly expanded exports of these products to China's vast market," he said.

The president of the National Chicken Council, George Watts, said the deal would benefit U.S. poultry producers.

"We estimate that when it is fully implemented, U.S. chicken exports should grow by 10 to 20 per cent per year," he said. The council estimates U.S. producers currently sell about \$300 million worth of poultry in China annually.

Exchange Rates		Thursday, 08-04-99		ACCESS #10000	
AMERICAN DOLLAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1827	1.8777	1.8337
EURO DOLLAR	0.8277	1.0000	0.8277	0.8277	0.8277
YEN DOLLAR	0.0094	0.0094	0.0094	0.0094	0.0094
SWISS FRANC	0.7500	0.7500	0.7500	0.7500	0.7500
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	0.6500	0.6500	0.6500	0.6500	0.6500
INDONESIAN RUPIAH	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
SINGAPORE DOLLAR	0.7000	0.7000	0.7000	0.7000	0.7000
THAI BATH	0.3500	0.3500	0.3500	0.3500	0.3500
BAHIAN DOLLAR	0.2500	0.2500	0.2500	0.2500	0.2500
LIBAN DOLLAR	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00
IRANIAN DOLLAR	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
AFGHAN DOLLAR	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
PAKISTANI DOLLAR	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
RUSSIAN RUBLE	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
UK POUND	0.6500	0.6500	0.6500	0.6500	0.6500
GERMAN MARK	0.5000	0.5000	0.5000	0.5000	0.5000
FRANCO	0.1667	0.1667	0.1667	0.1667	0.1667
ITALY LIRA	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
SPAIN PESA	166.67	166.67	166.67	166.67	166.67
PORTUGAL ESCUDO	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00
ARGENTINE PESO	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
CHILE PESO	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
COLOMBIA PESO	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
ECUADOR DOLLAR	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
VENEZUELA BOLIVAR	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
PERU SOLE	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
BOLIVIA BOLIVAR	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
PARAGUAY GUARANI	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
URUGUAY PESO	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
BRASIL REAL	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
MEXICO PESO	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
INDONESIA RUPIAH	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
SINGAPORE DOLLAR	0.7000	0.7000	0.7000	0.7000	0.7000
THAI BATH	0.3500	0.3500	0.3500	0.3500	0.3500
BAHIAN DOLLAR	0.2500	0.2500	0.2500	0.2500	0.2500
LIBAN DOLLAR	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00	1,500.00
IRANIAN DOLLAR	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
AFGHAN DOLLAR	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
PAKISTANI DOLLAR	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
RUSSIAN RUBLE	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
UK POUND	0.6500	0.6500	0.6500	0.6500	0.6500
GERMAN MARK	0.5000	0.5000	0.5000	0.5000	0.5000
FRANCO	0.1667	0.1667	0.1667	0.1667	0.1667
ITALY LIRA	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
SPAIN PESA	166.67	166.67	166.67	166.67	166.67
PORTUGAL ESCUDO	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00	200.00
ARGENTINE PESO	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
CHILE PESO	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
COLOMBIA PESO	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
ECUADOR DOLLAR	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
VENEZUELA BOLIVAR	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
PERU SOLE	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
BOLIVIA BOLIVAR	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
PARAGUAY GUARANI	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
URUGUAY PESO	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
BRASIL REAL	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
MEXICO PESO	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00

JORDAN TIMES TEL.:
5684311-5699634

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

1. Stain
5. Competitor
10. Two-tone
14. Stable female
15. Expanse
16. Not fooled by
17. Kin
18. Bias
20. Catastrophe
22. Wanders randomly
23. Sugar source
24. In that place
26. Mournful
29. Meager
30. Notes of scales
33. Rich cake
34. "Who's the Boss?" star
35. Booming jets letters
36. Helen's city
37. God
38. Issue a traffic ticket
39. Circle segment
40. Butcher's stock
41. Give the game away
42. Theol. belief
43. Comrade in arms
44. Corals, e.g.
45. Images of gods
47. Alleluia
48. Relish
50. Harshness
54. Small potatoes
57. Concept
58. Poker stake
59. Passenger
60. Mallard's kin
61. Lads
62. Video-game company
63. Span connection

DOWN

1. Coil, hotshot
2. Full flow
3. City on the Oka
4. Perseverance
5. Complain
6. Very angry
7. Diversity
8. Nova Scotia clock setting: abbr.
9. Lanai garland
10. Sorrow
11. Brown or Rice, e.g.
12. End of din or luncheon?
13. Playthings
19. Forum
21. Lion's locks
24. Temporary shelters
25. Vague
26. Rose essence
27. "Casablanca" co-star Peter
28. Predilection
29. Church congregation
31. Bar legally
32. Kin of Brena
34. Distributes cards
37. Wooded valley
38. Haste
40. Polynesian
41. New Zealand
42. Suffer defeat
44. Ancient Egyptian papers
46. Hawks' opponents
47. Organic compound
48. Shot in the dark
49. River of Florence
50. Verdi opera
51. Graphic beginning?
52. Yellowish-brown wood
53. New Haven campus
55. Coach
56. Paragon
57. Ignited

Peanuts



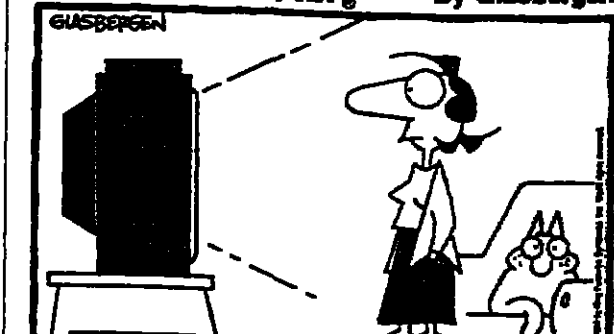
Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

GRABE

THACC

YEMMAH

NUBONI

Answer here: A

Yesterday's Jumbles: GRIEF AFIRE PILLAR KNOCKY

Answer: Bought by airline passengers — A "FARE" DELIVER

Times, Sunday, April 11, 1999
ping nations
efforts

Business & Finance

Jordan Times, Sunday, April 11, 1999 9

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Jordan Industrial Resources Company boosts sales and returns to profit

**** THE OPERATIONS** of the Jordan Industrial Resources Company was affected last year by the difficult local and international economic conditions as foreign demand for fatty acids and glycerine, both produced by the company, fell as a result of world economic recession, Board Chairman Ramzi Muasher told an ordinary meeting of the company's general assembly. "The recession created still competition between most companies in the same line of business and caused sales and prices to drop in local and outside markets," he said.

Muasher indicated that production costs also increased as a result of higher costs of various types of vegetable oils which are suitable for human consumption. He explained that the company's plant produces fatty acids which is used as a raw material in many industries the most important of which could be the soap industry. The plant also produces glycerine, according to international specifications, which is also used in many industries, mainly the pharmaceutical.

"These two products can be produced from various types of vegetable oils and in most cases, they are produced at our plant from palm oil and its derivatives which are produced in many countries in small amounts but are available in large amounts in Malaysia and Indonesia," the chairman said adding that the company imports its needs mainly from Malaysia. "In addition to its use in industry, the palm oil is used after refining for human consumption such as corn oil and sunflower oil," Muasher explained.

According to the annual report, the company sells approximately 90 per cent of the glycerine amounts that the local market consumes but at prices that are slightly lower than production costs. The report attributed that to many reasons, mainly the low international prices, the high prices of raw material and the very low

customs duties on glycerine imports. The company was able to export glycerine to many outside markets over the past years and opened new markets in 1998. "This product has become very easy to market because of its quality which was well received by local or foreign companies that used it," the report said. "Consequently, we hope international prices will improve to enable the company compete in prices."

As for fatty acids, the company said it has a good market in some neighbouring Arab countries. However, it added, it cannot compete in outside market because there is no capabilities to export fatty acids in bulk form and because of the high cost of filling them in barrels and shipping them. Muasher told the shareholders that the company will try to increase fatty acids sales in the local and traditional markets and will also try to open new markets abroad to export glycerine to them. "The firm will also follow up on its affiliated companies in marketing soap and soap granules so that they can be sold the fatty acids as raw material," he said.

The company's sales amounted to JD4.8 million last year and was able to generate JD618,000 operational profit which translated into around JD42,000 in net profit after deducting administrative and general expenses which were mostly bank interest. In 1997, sales amounted to JD1.5 million and the year-end result was a JD510,900 net loss.

Total assets at the end of 1998 amounted to JD15.4 million compared to JD13.3 million at the end of 1997. Current assets totalled JD5.5 million (JD2.2 million in 1997). Total current liabilities stood at JD4.6 million (JD2.3 million) and shareholders' equity at JD10.2 million.

Muasher concluded by informing the shareholders that the company got export contracts for around 70 per cent of annual sales (Al Ra'i + Al Dstour + Al Aswaq + Al Arab Al Yawm).

Arab Potash Company boosts profit by 42%

AMMAN (AFP) — Jordan's sole potash producer, Arab Potash Company, registered a rise of more than 42 per cent in net profit over 1998, recovering from its poor 1997 performance, the company's chairman said Saturday. Net profits increased 42.3

per cent to JD24.1 million (\$34 million) in 1998 after declining nearly 50 per cent over 1997, chairman of the board of directors, Saleh Irsheidat, told reporters. Irsheidat said the higher profits were due to a 7.7 per cent rise in production to over 1.5 million tonnes of the fertiliser in 1998, coupled with an increase in world potash prices. Production in 1997 dropped 20 per cent on the previous year. He attributed increased productivity to improved solar evaporation from the company's Dead Sea salt ponds after flooding in previous years had caused a

reduction in the density of minerals needed to produce potash. The chairman predicted that production would increase to 1.65 million tonnes in 1999 and said a continuing expansion programme should lift production to 2.4 million tonnes by 2004. Jordan is the world's sixth largest potash producer.

International potash sales account for about nine per cent of Jordan's total exports. The company, 55 per cent owned by the Jordanian government, exports mainly to India and Europe.

Jordan is the world's sixth largest potash producer.

Britain's millionaires getting younger and richer

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's millionaires are getting younger, richer and quicker at amassing their cash than ever before, according to a report to be published this weekend. The super-rich are doing better than ever thanks to a trickle-down effect of booming stock markets over the past year, said Philip Beresford, editor of the 1999 Sunday Times Rich List.

He has compiled the list of the wealthiest 1,000 people or families for 11 years, and the results of his research are always eagerly anticipated. The full list will be published Sunday, but details given so far show the combined wealth of Britain's richest 1,000 is around 114.829 trillion pounds (\$183.726 trillion), compared to 108.525 trillion pounds in 1998.

There are also increasing numbers of younger people joining the elite who have spotted a specific market and launched a successful business. The notable new entries include Julian Metcalfe and Sinclair Beecham, the partners behind sandwich shop chain, Pret A Manger, who share

675th position in this year's list with 33 million pounds each. Beresford said: "These are the sort of young people in their thirties who 30 years ago might have become lawyers and accountants but now do not want to go into boring professions and prefer to run their own businesses."

He added: "They are getting richer younger, and faster, and this will only increase with the growth of the Internet. The Internet is capable of spawning millionaires by the handful because if you get a good idea for the Internet it is not expensive to develop."

Beresford pointed to a rising number of wealthy Asians, particularly among younger generations, and people involved in the computer industry, as groups who enjoyed significant financial successes over the past year. Other notable new entries include veteran pop group the Bee Gees, in 266th place with 90 million pounds, and dancer Michael 80 million pounds.

Meanwhile former Beatle, Sir Paul McCartney, has consolidated his position as Britain's wealthiest pop star, topping the list of music millionaires for the second year running.

Second place in the music list is shared by Andrew Lloyd Webber and theatre impresario Sir Cameron Mackintosh with 350 million pounds each.

Other new entries on the music millionaires roll of honour include former Simple Minds singer Jim Kerr, Chris De Burgh, and Sir Tim Rice, whose recent work for Disney on "The Lion King" boosted his wealth to 33 million pounds.

Annie Lennox, famed for her role in the pop group Eurythmics and then her own successful solo career, remains the only female entertainer on the music list.

However, it is understood the Rich List as a whole will include many more women than in former years. Sir Julian Hodge, 94, the head of a Welsh banking family worth 120 million pounds, retains his place as the oldest member on the list.

At the far end of the age spectrum is Alexander de Byre, 24, who inherited 30 million pounds including an estate from his mother.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, APRIL 11, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're lucky today in many ways, but maybe not in romance. Your problem could be over exuberance. Don't push too hard, too fast. Give the object of your affection time to think it over and maintain control, or you could be left out in the cold.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Keep being your smiling, cheerful self today, even — especially — if it seems like you're not appreciated. You're actually making a bigger impression than you could possibly know. It may not be easy this time, so do it on purpose. You can get your point across with your winning smile when nothing else seems to work.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You're moving ahead by leaps and bounds, but someone you love may be dragging behind a little. That's because you learn more quickly than most of the other people. If you do have a loved one who's not quite keeping up, be patient. You're a great student, of course, but it's important for you to learn to be a great teacher, too.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) If a friend's dilemma has you concerned, offer to help. Your idea may be the most valuable resource you have to offer, along with your emotional support. You may not have realised how important those talents of yours are, but today they could make a big difference. Be generous with them.

LEO: (July 23 to August 23) There's a chance for a breakthrough today, in the area of romance, but it might look like a breakdown first. If you're just about ready to pack your things and go, hold off for just a moment. Could be what the other person's asking is more than you want to give, but look at the growth potential.

VIRGO: (August 24 to September 23) It will be nice to go travelling with friends, but it might make more sense to stay home and finish a project you started. You could save travel time by having them come to your place instead. They won't worry about a creative mess there if you don't, so don't fret about cleaning it up.

LIBRA: (September 24 to October 23) There will be plenty of days to move quickly next week. Today, do some planning instead. Start with the final result and work backwards from there. When you've figured out what has to be done and by when, actually doing it will be easy.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) Continue with your building project today, putting on the final touches. If you get everything complete now, you won't have to think about it again for years. This is true if you're building something out of wood or if you're building a relationship. It'll work either way.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You and your buddies are onto a good thing today. You're lucky at just about everything you try. Be careful when it comes to love, however. Flirting with a co-worker could cause more trouble than it's worth, even if it's not on company time.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) Your lesson today may have to do with love. Somebody you care a lot about might confuse you. At first everything seems fine, then everything seems to go wrong. Which way is it, really? Well, maybe it's both. Be a good listener and you'll get things back on an even keel.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) Yours is the sign of the scholar, of course, but you're also a professor, and today, that's the side you can use. Explain how things are to those who can't seem to figure it out for themselves, and do so gently. That way, they'll feel free to teach you, too.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) You may feel squeezed between a rock and a hard place. Everybody seems to want than you can provide. Don't go into a slump; get motivated instead. Maybe everybody thinks you can do more than you think you can. Stranger things have happened. Give it a try. Maybe they're right.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

JORDAN TIMES

FAX: 5696183

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Worries about a close friend or neighbour could cloud your thinking today. Instead of leaving your questions unsaid, go ahead and ask them. Once you know what's going on, you can get into action. Once you're in action, everything will be fine.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You and your friends need to talk over important matters today. You may not get all of them to settle yet, but you'll sure come up with some good ideas. Besides that, you'll have a great time, and you'll make each other much stronger. Each of you could go it alone, but together you'll have lots more fun.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Don't try to use reason with an emotional person. It's not going to get you anywhere. You'll be better off to listen and take notes. Once the other guy feels really heard, he or she will be more willing to negotiate. Wait until then to offer your suggestions.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) Your intuition should be working pretty well today. That's important, because you're up against tough competition. Somebody's ordering you around, to your dismay. It might be wise to comply, however, especially if there's a lot of money involved.

LEO: (July 23 to August 23) You may very well have more bills than money today. If so, don't despair, but don't go out buying that new toy you've been yearning for, either. Put that off for just a little while longer. You may just find you can do without it.

VIRGO: (August 24 to September 23) Looks like your partner is right, so go along with that idea. It's not fully figured out yet, and that's where your input comes in. Let fantasy get you inspired, then put in reality checks.

LIBRA: (September 24 to October 23) You've really got your work cut out for you on Monday. Besides that, it looks like you could be saddled with a whiny co-worker. Instead of being irritated, be compassionate. Once this person has

had a chance to talk and really feel listened to, he or she could come up with a brilliant plan. And you might need one.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) The subject of money could arise today, and if it does, take care. You might simply disagree with the person you love most. It's a hot topic anyway, so don't press. Your chances are better of reaching a compromise tomorrow.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're in a pretty good mood today, but a conversation with someone at home could take up more time than you'd planned. It could even be a television show that gets you entranced and makes you late for your next appointment. You're just going to have to keep track of the time.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) You've got a couple of tough problems to deal with, but that's OK. You're smart today and getting smarter. Take on a challenge, and start by doing the homework. Once you figure out what the problem is, the rest is going to be easy. You just have to learn a new skill, that's all.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) You know a lot about a lot of things, but money probably isn't one of them. That's quite often an Aquarian deficiency, and it's because you're more interested in ideas than in filthy lucre. But actually, a little folding green comes in handy if you want to get a few ideas across. And if you want to study money, today's a great day to begin.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) You're looking great today, with the moon in your sign. Mercury's there, too, making you even more brilliant than usual. But you might also be feeling more generous, which could be dangerous. You may feel as though you're made of money, and you aren't. Take care if you go shopping in nice stores.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

COMPANY	OPEN	CLOSE	CHANGE
BANKS			
ARAB BK	215.000	212.500	-1.19%
INTL BK	1.250	1.250	0.00%
JK. OF JORDAN	1.250	1.250	0.00%
MIDDLE EAST BK	0.250	0.250	0.00%
INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK	1.250	1.250	0.00%
THE HOUSING BK	1.250	1.250	0.00%
JK. KUWAIT BK	1.250	1.250	0.00%
JK. GULF BK	0.250	0.250	0.00%
JK. ALBANK	1.250	1.250	0.00%
JK. INVEST. BK	1.250	1.250	0.00%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.250	0.250	0.00%
BANKS INDEX			
	278.090		-1.11%
INSURANCE			
HEBREW INS	1.250	1.250	-1.47%
JK. FRENCH INS	2.450	2.450	-1.61%
ARAB INS	2.100	2.100	-2.35%
JK. GULF INS	1.250	1.250	-10.55%
INSURANCE INDEX			
	122.590		-1.65%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1.250	1.250	0.00%
IRBID ELECTRICITY	1.250	1.250	0.00%
IRBID SECURITIES	1.250	1.250	0.00%
JK. INTL. TRADING CENT	0.250	0.250	-8.00%
AL-RAT	1.250	1.250	-0.80%
AL-SAGHORE	1.250	1.250	-3.00%
AL-SAGHORE FOR EDU	0.250	0.250	-3.00%
ARAB INTL. FOR INVS & EDU	1.250	1.250	-0.25%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.250	1.250	+3.55%
UNITED FOR FINANCIAL INVS	1.250	1.250	-5.55%
SERVICES INDEX			
	111.900		-0.08%
INDUSTRY			
AT-TANDEEP	1.000	1.100	+4.79%
PHOSPHATE	2.500	2.500	-2.00%
ARAB POTASH	4.300	4.210	-2.09%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10.800	10.870	-0.28%
JK. YAMANA	1.250	1.250	-0.20%
THE IND. COMM. & AGRICULT	1.000	1.020	-0.97%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	3.000	3.040	-0.33%
CERAMIC IND	1.210	1.250	-3.31%
CEMENT & CIGARET	1.250	1.250	-1.20%
JK. PAPER	0.250	0.250	-0.20%
INTL. STEEL	0.250	0.250	-1.20%
IRBID STEEL	0.250	0.250	-1.20%
DAIR AL DAWA	0.250	0.250	-1.20%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.250	0.250	-1.20%
JK. STEEL	1.210	1.250	-3.31%
ALUMINIUM	0.250	0.250	-1.20%
CHLORINE	1.250	1.250	0.00%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.250	0.250	-0.20%
SECTOR CONVERTING	0.250	0.250	-1.20%
PTL IND	0.250	0.250	0.00%
PETRO - CHEMICAL	0.250	0.250	-0.20%
ROCKWELL	0.250	0.250	-1.20%
GENERAL CHEMICAL	0.250	0.250	-1.20%
GENERAL INVS	0.250	0.250	-1.20%
INTL. CABLE	0.250	0.250	-1.20%
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Divorced Agassi cruises into final with 'Boom boom' Becker

HONG KONG (AFP) — Tennis star Andre Agassi shrugged off the heartache of his divorce from wife Brooke Shields to power into the final of the \$350,000 Hong Kong Open here on Saturday where he will meet semi-retired veteran Boris Becker.

Agassi and actress-wife Shields filed for mutual divorce in Las Vegas this week.

But despite the upheaval in his personal life, Agassi stayed on course for his first tournament victory in 1999 with a straightforward 6-3, 6-0 victory over Germany's Hendrik Dreckmann.

"Yes, it is true that we have filed for divorce... and we are divorced. It is over," said Agassi when asked to confirm a statement released by the couple's Las Vegas publicist.

Agassi, who entered the Hong Kong tournament at the eleventh hour through a wild card, denied he came to Asia to get away from the pressures of the high-profile divorce.

"The divorce had nothing to do with my coming here. I needed to play more tennis. I will be going to Tokyo soon after this tournament to play in the Japan Open," said Agassi.

The American World No.



Andre Agassi of the United States looks up during his semi-final match against Hendrik Dreckmann of Germany at the Salem Open ATP tennis tournament in Hong Kong (Reuters photo)

12 and third seed was in awesome form as he crushed Dreckmann in just 48 minutes.

ment in the third, fifth and ninth games to win the first set. He was unstoppable in the second set.

"I did not find my rhythm straight away. But I'm feeling really good. I'm moving well and hitting the ball well," said Agassi who will be playing his first ATP Tour final in 1999.

Becker booked his berth with a 6-4, 6-4 win over compatriot Bernd Karbacher. The unheralded Karbacher, whose giant-killing feats knocked out second seed Patrick Rafter in the first round, had no answer to Becker's serve-and-volley game.

"My timing and rhythm is very good. I'm thrilled to be in the final," said Becker. His last tournament win was in 1996 when he won the Grand Slam Cup in Munich.

It will be the 14th time the pair have met — the last time being in the semi-finals of the 1995 U.S. Open when Agassi beat Becker in four sets. Agassi holds a 9-4 win record over Becker.

"It will be a great final. We can create another memory on court," said Agassi. Becker added: "It is always special to play Andre. We have had a number of great matches in the past."

BobbyJo wins Grand National for Ireland

LIVERPOOL (AFP) — BobbyJo ran out a fairytale winner of the £245,588 (\$395,000) Grand National for Ireland at Aintree here on Saturday.

The well-backed 10-1 shot was trained by Tommy Carberry, who rode L'Escargot, the last horse to win the world famous steeplechase for the Emerald Isle back in 1975, and ridden by son Paul.

"Sure we're going to have a mild party for a year-and-a-half!" Carberry senior said afterwards.

The 25/1 shot Blue Charm, who led the field under jockey Lorcan Wyer for much of the four-and-a-half miles, put up a brave bid for Scotland in second 10 lengths behind with Call It A Day, 7/1, a neck away in third and Addington Boy fourth, a 10/1 shot.

Punters who had lumped on handicap good thing Double Thriller were dealt a cruel blow seconds after the start when the Cheltenham Gold Cup fourth parted company with jockey Joe Tizzard at the first fence.

While Double Thriller's connections were distraught BobbyJo's victory sparked joyous celebrations among the huge Irish contingent as the nine-year-old, successful in last year's Irish National, made his way back into the fabled Aintree winner's enclosure.

Ridden to perfection BobbyJo was always well in contention, wrestling the lead from Blue Charm after the 30th and last fence.

Double Thriller apart there were relatively few casualties on the first circuit but that all changed at the fearsome Bechers' Brook second time round where Bedlam ensued with five fallers including the fancied Eudipe and Fiddling The Facts.

Jenny Pitman, saddling her last National runner before retirement from the training ranks, must have had high hopes of recording a third victory with Nahthen Lad, who was bang in the middle of the leading group and in with every chance until three from home until he faded to finish 11th.

Last year's winner Earth Summit found the good going too fast for him but ran on in the closing stages to finish eighth.

The result will have served to blot out the memory of Carberry senior's black National experience two years ago when his Rust Never Sleeps had to be put down after breaking a shoulder.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Gebrselassie given U.N. post

ADDIS ABABA (AFP) — Ethiopia's 10,000 metres Olympic champion Haile Gebrselassie has been named the United Nations' goodwill ambassador for development in Ethiopia. The appointment, aimed at ridding his country of poverty, was reported here on Saturday in the Ethiopian Herald, a government newsletter. In March 25-year-old Gebrselassie, who holds the world outdoor records for 5,000 and 10,000 metres, confirmed his place as master of the boards when he took world indoor gold in the 1500 and 3000 metres in Japan.

Mijatovic to play today

MADRID (AFP) — Real Madrid's Yugoslav ace Predrag Mijatovic will be in the line-up for Sunday's Spanish league game against Celta Vigo, team coach John Toshack said here on Saturday. Mijatovic was earlier this week fined 5 million pesetas (\$35,000), the maximum fine allowed under club rules, for his refusal to play because of the Kosovo conflict. The Montenegrin was also warned that if he continues to refuse to play he may be thrown out of the team. Mijatovic, whose family lives in Belgrade, has missed two games for the world club champions. He said: "If I do not play, it's because I don't have the morale because I am not focused." The striker earned a place in Real Madrid folklore last year when he scored the winning goal in the Champions' League final win over Italian champions Juventus — the "meringue's" seventh European title and their first since their days of European dominance in the 1950s and 1960s.

Celtic into Scottish Cup final

GLASGOW (AFP) — Celtic reached the Scottish Cup final on Saturday when goals by Dutchman Regi Blinker and Australian Mark Viduka gave them a 2-0 semi-final win over Dundee United at Ibrox. Blinker scored a fine individual effort after half an hour to put Jozef Venglos's side in control and Viduka made the game safe before half-time with a second goal after 42 minutes. Celtic will play the winner of Sunday's other semi between Rangers and St Johnstone at Celtic Park.

Hands off Zidane, warn Juventus

TURIN (AFP) — Italian giants Juventus on Friday issued a "hands off" warning to Manchester United and other clubs hoping to sign French World Cup star Zinedine Zidane. Juventus director general Luciano Moggi said Zidane was not for sale at any price and was a key part of the club's plans for next season. Moggi told the ANSA news agency that no-one at the club had spoken with Manchester United chairman Martin Edwards about a possible deal involving Zidane, contrary to media reports. "We have not spoken to Edwards, although naturally we met at an official function when the clubs played in the European Cup semi-finals this week," said Moggi. "We haven't discussed anything about Zidane because he is one of the players on whom we are building our future. He is one of our key players for next season." Moggi pointed out that midfielder Zidane has a contract with Juventus that runs until 2004 and that the player has not expressed any desire to leave.

Wuart eases Nancy's relegation fears

NANCY (AFP) — Samuel Wuart earned 10-man Nancy a 1-0 win at home to Metz here on Friday in a French championship local derby. Wuart found the net two minutes from half-time following good work from Christophe Bastien and Republic of Ireland international Tony Cascarino. Nancy defender Mehdi Meniri was sent off for a foul just before the break but the home side held on. The win eased the threat of relegation, with Nancy moving up from fourth-from-bottom to seventh-from bottom in the table.

IOC ethics commission named

GENEVA (AFP) — The eight members of the new International Olympic Committee (IOC) ethics commission, which will act as a watchdog on IOC activities, were named in a press release from the organisation's Lausanne headquarters on Friday. The commission was set up in the wake of the Salt Lake City scandal, sparked late last year, where members were bribed to vote for the U.S. city. The scandal eventually brought about six expulsions, four resignations and 10 IOC members being censured. The new commission comprises Keba Mbaye of Senegal, Australia's Kevan Gosper and Chiharu Igaya of Japan, all three IOC members, plus American former senator Howard Baker, French politician Robert Badinter, Peru's former secretary general of the United Nations Javier Perez de Cuellar, former Swiss confederation president Kurt Furgler, and Canadian Olympic athlete Charmaine Crooks, a member of the IOC Athletes' Commission.

Buzzer-beater lifts Pistons over Pacers

INDIANAPOLIS (R) — Lindsay Hunter's desperation 3-pointer at the buzzer gave the Detroit Pistons an improbable 102-101 victory over the first-place Indiana Pacers in a Central Division battle on Friday.

Rik Smits made a career-high 15 free throws, but the one he missed cost the Pacers the game. Smits went 15-of-16 from the foul line and scored a season-high 35 points.

"I really don't feel good about missing one of those free throws at the end," Smits said.

Grant Hill scored 30 points and Joe Dumars added 25 for the Pistons, who trailed 100-96 before Jud Buechler came off the bench and drained a 3-pointer with 6.2 seconds to play.

"We just kept our composure in the fourth quarter," said Hill. "It was a big game to come back in. Luckily, the ball bounced our way."

The Pacers watched Smits go to the line with a chance to increase the lead to three. But the 80 per cent foul shooter missed his first of the night before sinking the second to make it 101-99.

Hill received the inbound pass and made a mad dash up the right sideline before throwing a cross-court pass to Hunter, who released a high, arching leaper that banked in as time expired.

"Smits missing that last free throw was the break we needed," Hunter said. "I'm just glad we won. Indiana is a great team. Our last play was already set up."

Hunter, who scored 17 points, made the last of Detroit's 11 3-pointers, helping the Pistons pull into fourth place in the Eastern Conference, good for home court in the first round.

There were more last-second heroics in Charlotte, where Bobby Phillips hit a 16-foot jumper off an inbound pass with two-tenths of a second remaining as the Hornets pulled out a 90-88 victory over the slumping Washington Wizards.

Elden Campbell scored a season-high 32 points for Charlotte.

At Utah, Clifford Robinson committed an unthinkable foul on Karl Malone attempting an improbable three-pointer, and the mailman made all three free throws to lift the Jazz to a 93-92 victory over the Suns.

Chris Morris had appeared to hand a loss to his former team when he drained a 3-pointer from the right corner with 3.7 seconds remaining to make it 92-90.

"I come out early before anyone gets here and shoot 50-100 free throws before every game and just get into a rhythm because situations like that happen in the ballgame," said Malone, not known as a clutch foul shooter.

Phoenix had one desperation chance, but Jason Kidd's fallaway from the 3-point line missed at the buzzer.

In Vancouver, one night after beating the league-best Portland Trail Blazers, the Seattle SuperSonics lost to one of the worst, falling 98-83 to the Grizzlies.

Shareef Abdur-Rahim scored 28 points and the Vancouver Grizzlies snapped a five-game losing streak.

In Atlanta, the desperate New York Knicks hit crucial jumpers and did not commit a turnover in the fourth quarter of an 86-78 victory over the Hawks.

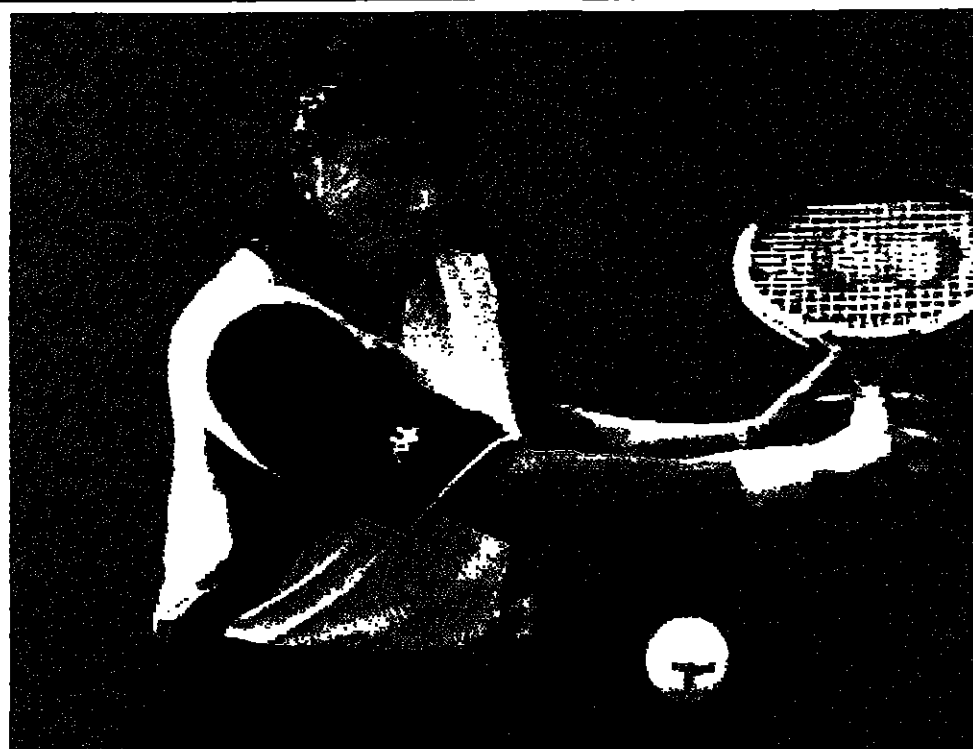
Patrick Ewing scored 16 points and Latrell Sprewell 18 for New York, which suffered an embarrassing 106-82 loss at Charlotte on Wednesday. The Knicks (19-17) moved a half-game ahead of Toronto for the final Eastern Conference playoff spot.

In New Jersey, Keith Van Horn scored 30 points as the Nets defeated the Toronto Raptors 106-99 for their fifth win in six games.

At Los Angeles, Shaquille O'Neal and Glen Rice each scored 25 points as the Lakers handed the Timberwolves their 10th straight loss at the Great Western Forum, 96-89.

In Orlando, Penny Hardaway had 26 points and nine rebounds and Darrell Armstrong added 18 points and seven assists as the East-leading Magic extended their win streak to a season-high six games, 95-83 over the Milwaukee Bucks.

In Boston, Allen Iverson scored nine of his 23 points in the first quarter when the Philadelphia 76ers raced to a 14-point lead en route to an 83-67 rout of the Celtics, who were held to their lowest total of the season.



Conchita Martinez

Martinez ousts defending champion Pierce

AMELIA ISLAND (AFP) — Fifth seed Conchita Martinez of Spain rallied to dethrone No. 4 Mary Pierce of France while ninth seed Anna Kournikova of Russia had no trouble Friday in the quarter-finals of the WTA Tour's Bausch and Lomb Championships.

Martinez was on the brink of defeat, but won a second-set tiebreaker and dominated the third set in a 3-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 victory. Kournikova wiped out Switzerland's Patty Schnyder, the sixth seed, 6-0, 6-2. In the day's other quarter-final match, Romania's Ruxandra Dragomir ousted Fabiola Zuluaga 6-3, 6-1. Zuluaga became the first Colombian — female or male — to make the quarter-finals of a major professional tennis tournament.

American Monica Seles, seeded second, will take on fifth seed Amade Coetzee of South Africa in the night match. Martinez awaits the winner, while Kournikova will meet Dragomir in the other semi-final on Saturday.

Martinez, who won here in 1995, is 5-6 all-time against Pierce, including 3-4 on clay. She handed Pierce only her fourth loss in 22 matches here and denied her a fourth straight trip to the finals. This was a rematch of the 1998 final. Kournikova is 3-1 against Schnyder — all on clay — including a three-set triumph at Hilton Head in the semifinals. Kournikova was coming off an upset of top-seeded Lindsay Davenport on Thursday.

In addition to that defeat, Schnyder was trying to avenge a loss to Kournikova in the round of 16 here last year. She was voted Most Improved Player by her WTA Tour peers last season.

Seles demolished Alexandra Fusai of France, 6-0, 6-1, to reach the quarter-finals. She has a 13-5 match record in 1999, including a 2-0 mark in quarter-finals, beating Steffi Graf in the Australian Open and Coetzee in the Pan Pacific Open. But Seles, who has 43 career titles, fell in the semi-finals on both occasions.

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SCOREBOARD

NBA

Philadelphia	83	Boston	67
New York	86	Atlanta	78
Charlotte	90	Washington	88
New Jersey	106	Toronto	99
Orlando	95	Milwaukee	83
Detroit	102	Indiana	101
Utah	93	Phoenix	92
Vancouver	98	Seattle	93
LA Lakers	96	Minnesota	89

National League

Florida	7	Philadelphia	4
NY Mets	10	Montreal	3
Pittsburgh	2	Chicago Cubs	1
Atlanta	3	Arizona	2
Houston	3	Milwaukee	2
Cincinnati	3	St. Louis	0
Los Angeles	9	Colorado	6
San Francisco	8	San Diego	3

American League

NY Yankees	12	Detroit	3 (7 Innings)
Kansas City	10	Chi White Sox	5
Toronto	7	Baltimore	4
Boston	4	Tampa Bay	1
Cleveland	14	Minnesota	5
Anaheim	8	Texas	4
Seattle	6	Oakland	1

English Premiership

Aston Villa	3	Southampton	0
Derby	1	Nott. Forest	0
Leicester	0	West Ham	0
Middlesbrough	2	Charlton	0

Scottish Premiership

Kilmarnock	4	Aberdeen	2
Motherwell	1	Dundee	2

German League

MSV Duisburg	2	Hamburg SV	3
SC Freiburg	0	Werder Bremen	2

Dutch League

Sparta Rotterdam	0	RKC Waalwijk	1
MVV Maastricht	1	PSV Eindhoven	1

Austrian League

Sturn Graz	5	Austria Lustenau	2
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Belgian League

Charleroi	0	Anderlecht	2
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Belgian Cup

Genk	2	Lierse	0
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French League

Nancy	1	Metz	0
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Relegation woes continue for Southampton

LONDON (AFP) —

Southampton suffered their eighth successive away defeat when they lost 3-0 to Aston Villa at Villa Park on Saturday to remain second from bottom in the English Premiership and in serious danger of losing their battle against relegation.

Mark Draper, Julian Joachim and Dion Dublin scored for Villa, while Southampton had Dutchman Claus Lundekvam sent off before half-time.

Struggling Charlton, a point above Southampton, lost 2-0 away to Middlesbrough at the Riverside Stadium and stay fifth from bottom on 31 points but six points adrift of Coventry, one place above them on 37.

A late Horacio Carbonari goal saw Derby beat doomed Nottingham Forest 1-0 in the East Midlands derby at Pride Park. Both sides had a player sent off in the second half — goalkeeper Russell Hoult for Derby and captain Richard Gough of Forest.

Leicester and West Ham failed to find the net in a 0-0 draw at Filbert Street. Villa, whose most likely route to a UEFA Cup place is via the Intertoto cup this summer, notched up their first win in three months against struggling Southampton at Villa Park.

On Sunday, focus will be on the two FA cup semifinals with Manchester United locking horns with holders Arsenal at Villa Park and Newcastle United taking on League Cup winners Tottenham at Old Trafford.

In the English Premiership, third-placed Chelsea have the opportunity to close the gap to within two points of league leaders Manchester United when they visit Wimbledon at Selhurst Park.

Leeds, in fourth place on 57 points and just two points behind Chelsea having played a game more, play Liverpool at Elland Road on Monday.

Hakkinen fastest in Brazil practice

SAO PAULO (AFP) — World champion Mika Hakkinen's McLaren-Mercedes set the fastest time in Friday's rain-hit opening practice sessions for Sunday's Brazilian Grand Prix at Interlagos.

The Finn, who dominated last year's race weekend before sweeping to a second successive victory, finished just under half-a-second ahead of his rivals as he bids for a third straight triumph in the race.

Hakkinen clocked 1min 18.881sec at an average speed of 195.879kph as he finished ahead of his Scottish teammate David Coulthard.

"I'm very satisfied with the way things worked for us today despite the difficult conditions," Hakkinen said. "We are certainly very optimistic going into qualifying."

The Ferrari pair of Germany's Michael Schumacher and Ireland's Eddie Irvine were third and fourth fastest.

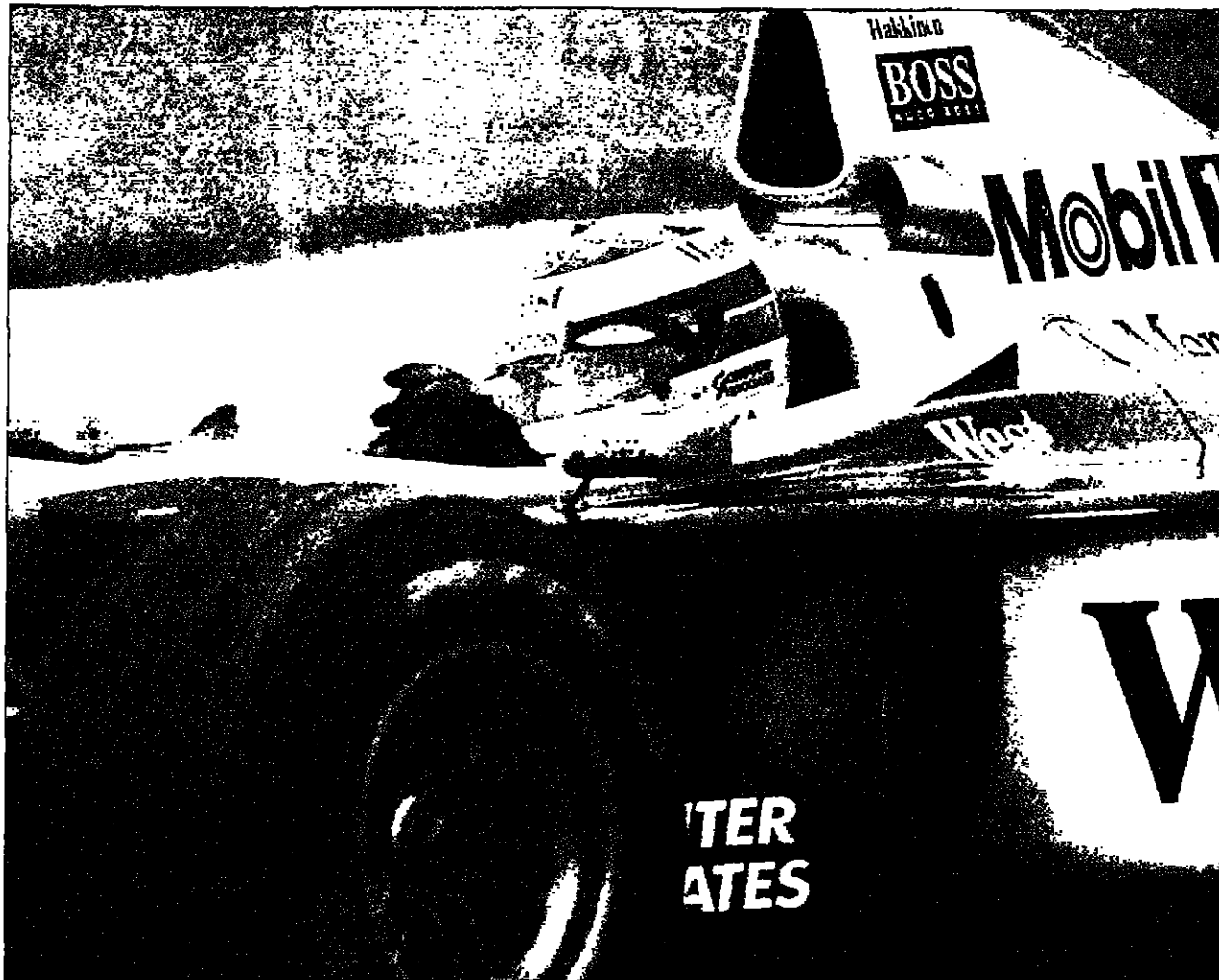
Schumacher was oozing confidence, saying his car was particularly impressive in the drier conditions.

Benetton's Giancarlo Fisichella was fifth quickest on a day when rain fell during both sessions, while local hero Rubens Barrichello maintained the promise he has shown for the Stewart team this year.

Barrichello, who was fifth in the season-opening Melbourne race despite starting from the pit-lane, clocked the sixth best time on his home track to underline the team's hopes of a podium finish.

"We made progress throughout the day and car performed well, even with a full fuel tank," Barrichello said.

Johnny Herbert, who made his grand prix debut in Brazil 10 years ago, was 13th quickest in the



Reigning Formula One world champion Mika Hakkinen powers his McLaren MP4/14 car during a free practice session in the rain at the Interlagos race track in Sao Paulo. Hakkinen finished the day in provisional first place, with the final time trials yet to be determined. The Brazilian Grand Prix will take place at the Interlagos circuit Sunday (Reuters photo)

other Stewart but former world champions Damon Hill and Jacques Villeneuve were the two slowest drivers after both were plagued by technical problems.

Qualifying is scheduled for Saturday ahead of Sunday's race. The high placings for the two Ferraris showed Schumacher and Irvine on track despite an earlier spat between the pair.

Irishman Irvine, who won the season-opening race in Australia, said he believes he has a realistic chance of winning this season's drivers' title.

while Schumacher, the team's number one driver, said Irvine was being presumptuous.

"Ferrari want to win the drivers' championship and they believe Michael is their best chance and I can't argue with that," Irvine said.

"But if I can win on a few occasions and Michael has a few problems then maybe the situation with the team will change."

"You just have to look back to 1984 with McLaren when Alain Prost was considerably quicker than Niki Lauda,

but it was Lauda who won the championship. The fastest driver doesn't always win the title."

Schumacher, who limped home last in Melbourne after suffering from technical problems, dismissed his teammates' ambitions.

"After winning one grand prix it is a bit early to become philosophical and talk about winning the championship," he said.

"If, after half the season the situation has continued, then it would be time to ask such a question."

"The situation between us is the same as it was before the first race and I would be very surprised if it completely changed."

"I have had the upper hand so far and I have not seen a sign that I do not have it any more."

"It would need a lot of bad luck for me and Ferrari for it to change around and I cannot see me being that unlucky."

"But I am very happy to have him in my team because he can support the team very strongly."

"It was time for Eddie to win his first race because he has done a great job for the team over the last three years."

Indians pound Twins, Yankees crush Tigers; A's, White Sox lose

MINNEAPOLIS (R) — The Cleveland Indians arrived in Minnesota early Friday morning and opted not to take batting practice. They didn't need it.

The Indians collected 20 hits as Wil Cordero drove in four runs and Manny Ramirez and Jim Thome added three RBI apiece in a 14-5 rout of the twins.

Kenny Lofton went 4-for-5 and knocked in two runs for Cleveland, which has won its last three games by a combined 32-7 score.

"We got a lot of breaks tonight, a lot of balls we hit well fell in but we did hit some balls hard that fell in as well," Indians manager Mike Hargrove said.

"The guys have been getting on base that should get on base for the boomers. That sets up things nicely," Thome's mammoth two-run homer in the sixth inning off rookie Darin Perkins extended the lead to 12-2. His 16th career home run moved him past Ken Keltner into eighth place on the Indians' all-time list.

"I felt good tonight. I felt I waited on the ball very well and got some good pitches to hit," Thome said. "Hopefully, we won't take batting practice tomorrow." Charles Nagy (1-0) was the beneficiary, allowing four runs — three earned — and six hits over seven innings. He recorded his first win in six decisions at the Metrodome.

"I'm just glad to get that out of the way so I don't have to hear about it anymore," Nagy said about his record at the Metrodome. "I've been coming here for nine years. I've pitched some pretty good games but just didn't win."

"We have had a lineup

like that for five to six years so it is no secret that they can hit. As a pitcher, you just go out there and do your job."

In New York, the Yankees welcomed back a legend, remembered another and celebrated one of the greatest seasons in baseball history before doing what they do best — win.

Chili Davis belted his eighth career Grand Slam and David Cone carried a no-hitter into the sixth inning as New York buried the Detroit Tigers 12-3 on opening day at Yankee stadium.

The game was called in the top of the seventh after a rain delay of more than an hour.

Hall of famer Yogi Berra, at the stadium for the first time since he was fired as Yankees Manager

in 1985, threw out the ceremonial first pitch to seal his reconciliation with owner George Steinbrenner.

Before the game, there was a moment of silence for hall of famer Joe Dimaggio, who died March 8 at age 84 after a long bout with lung cancer and pneumonia.

Two other New York hall of famers — Phil Rizzuto and Whitey Ford — raised a world series championship banner near Monument Park Beyond the left centre-field wall. Last year, the Yankees set an American League record with 114 regular-season wins before claiming their 24th crown.

At Tampa Bay, Mark Portugal returned to the American league and allowed three singles over 6 1/3 scoreless innings as

the Boston Red Sox spoiled the home opener of the Devil Rays, 4-1.

Portugal, who last pitched in the junior circuit in 1988, walked two and struck out three. Mark Guthrie tossed 1 2/3 scoreless innings before Derek Lowe allowed a solo homer in the ninth to Fred McGriff. The Red Sox improved to 4-0 and are the American League's lone unbeaten team.

In Chicago, Mike Sweeney doubled twice and homered and the Kansas City Royals capitalised on three fifth-

inning errors by Mike Sirota to spoil the home opener of the White Sox, 10-5.

Scott Leius had a three-run homer for the Royals in support of Brian Barber, who allowed three runs over five innings.

Sirota (0-1) allowed nine runs — three earned — and nine hits in five innings. His three errors in one inning tied the American League record for miscues in an inning by a pitcher, set by the Yankees' Tommy John on July 27, 1988.

In Seattle, making his

first appearance since April 20, 1998, after surgery for a torn knee ligament, Butch Henry allowed just an unearned run and two hits over seven innings as the Mariners defeated the Oakland A's 6-1.

Edgar Martinez hit a three-run homer for Seattle in the first.

At Texas, Orlando Palmeiro led off the game with a homer and the Anaheim Angels went on to an 8-4 win over the Rangers.

Chuck Finley tossed six effective innings to snap a

personal nine-game losing streak against Texas.

Todd Greene, Troy Glaus and Tim Salmon each drove in two runs for the Angels, who recorded five doubles and three homers among their 12 hits.

In Baltimore, Shannon Stewart homered on the fifth pitch of the game and went on to score three runs as the Toronto Blue Jays outlasted a 95-minute rain delay and handed the Orioles their third straight loss, 7-4.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TANNIAH HIRSCH
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SOMETHING NEW

North-South vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH	EAST
♠ K 10 9	♠ 6 5 3
♥ 10 3	♥ 9 4 2
♦ A 6 5	♦ Q J 10 8
♣ A Q 10 9 8	♣ K J 4
WEST	SOUTH
♠ 8 7 4 2	♠ A Q J
♥ A 8 7 6 5	♥ K Q J 3
♦ 9 2	♦ K 7 4 3
♣ 7 3	♣ 6 5 2

The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1NT Pass Pass Pass

Opening lead: Six of ♣

"The Bridge World," founded by Ely Culbertson in October 1929, is the world's oldest continuously published bridge magazine. In that time, it has had only five editors! First was the founder, followed by Albert Morehead, Alphonse Moyse, Jr.

Edge Kaplan and now Jeff Rubens. If there has been any complaint about the magazine, it was that too much space was devoted to high-level bridge and not enough for the average player. That has now been remedied by the addition of a new section, titled "Bridgeworks," devoted to any player who is seeking to improve his game, so increasing the magazine's appeal. (Annual subscription \$52; call 800-366-1939.) This is the sort of hand you might find, culled from the magazine's March 1993 issue.

North-South arrive quickly at three no trump and West leads a fourth-best ♣. With eight tricks available once the ace of hearts is forced out, declarer will have to rely on a second club trick for the contract. That needs only to find West with either the king or jack of clubs.

Declarer wins the first trick and immediately leads a club to the eight, losing to East's jack. Back comes ♠ heart, and West must allow declarer to win the trick! Now when South takes a second club finesse, East can win and perish with a third heart, and West collects three heart tricks to sink an excellent game.

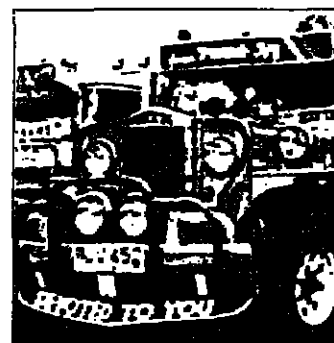
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UNSCOM says Iraq submitted new data on germ warfare

UNITED NATIONS (R) — As the U.N. Security Council debates its future policy towards Iraq, the chief weapons inspector told members Baghdad had only recently revealed some data on its past germ warfare programme.

In a report circulated late on Friday, Richard Butler, head of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM), accused Iraq of withholding documents and not declaring dual-use material, such as growth media that can be used to produce biological agents.

Arms experts have long feared that Iraq had obfuscated its biological weapons programme, which was established in 1975 and had produced such deadly toxins as anthrax.

The new report said Iraq had volunteered new information to the council in a February paper "in which it has revised its previous statements on the material balance of growth media."

But the report did not give details or evaluate the significance of the disclosure except to say that U.N. inspectors in December had discovered "dual-use material such as growth media which had not been declared by Iraq."

UNSCOM spokesman Ewen Buchanan said the gap

in information was evident even while the Security Council was discussing a new arms system to monitor Iraq's potential nuclear, ballistic, chemical and biological arms.

"The persistent finding over several years of undeclared equipment and material obviously raises some concern about Iraq's commitment to the implementation of a monitoring plan and we want to alert the council to this," he said.

Iraq, which says it has no more weapons of mass destruction, insists on the lifting of stringent U.N. sanctions, imposed when it invaded Kuwait in August 1990. They are linked to the elimination of its dangerous weapons.

The new report will be considered by the council late next week. Butler is expected to attend the session after Russia barred him from Wednesday's consultations.

But Moscow's U.N. ambassador, Sergei Lavrov, who wants Butler dismissed and UNSCOM abolished, told reporters: "I don't care about this report at all. I don't care about UNSCOM."

"What is UNSCOM? What are they about to report? How they were spending the last months after December doing nothing in this building? It's a

joke," he said.

The council is considering reports from three panels it established on how to monitor Iraq's arms potential, improve hardships for ordinary Iraqis and account for missing Kuwaitis and Kuwaiti property.

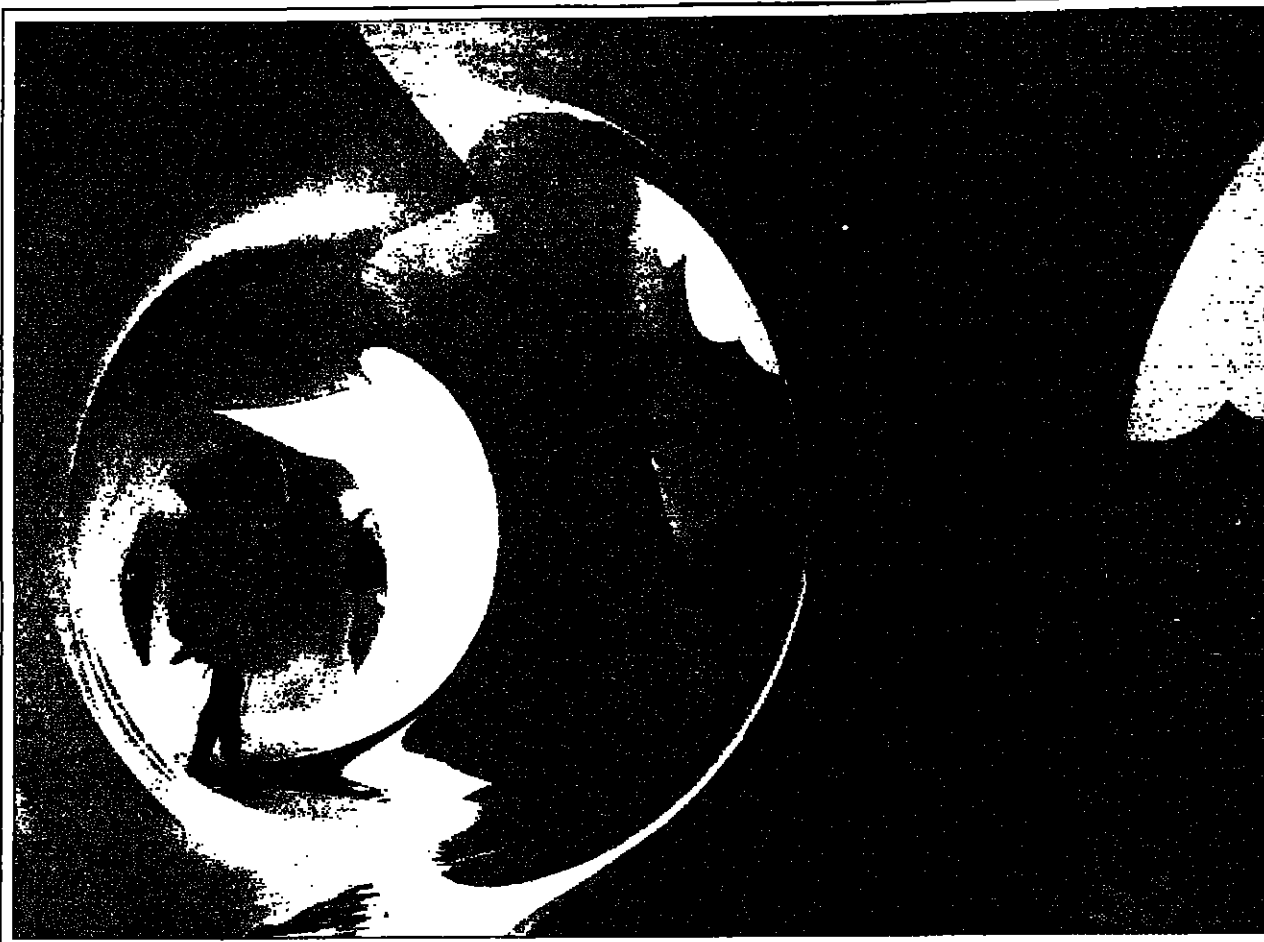
But there are few signs members were moving towards a solution. Russia, China and France want the sanctions greatly reduced or lifted entirely as an inducement for Iraq to allow arms inspectors back into the country. The United States and Britain oppose this.

Other members, such as Canada, favour some sanctions relief, saying the panels' proposals should be instituted.

The disarmament panel concluded that the "bulk" of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction had been dismantled and said remaining issues could be resolved under a monitoring system provided it included on-site inspections.

The panel on humanitarian issues suggested easing but not lifting economic sanctions by allowing foreign investments in its oil industry and some agriculture export commodities.

Iraq has attacked the reports, saying they put new labels on old discredited policies.



LABYRINTH IN DRESDEN: A girl walks through an exhibition called 'Wonderful World' in Dresden on Saturday. Visitors walk through a labyrinth of tunnels and domes made of synthetic material surrounded with music and different fragrances. The 'aerial sculpture' is made by British artist Alan Parkinson (Reuters photo)

54 killed in military operation near Turkish-Iraqi border against PKK

ANKARA (AFP) — A five-day Turkish military operation near Turkey's border with Iraq against the banned Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) has claimed 54 lives, the Turkish general staff said in a statement on Saturday.

"At the end of an operation carried out by our security forces between April 5-9 in an area neighbouring the Turkish-Iraqi border, 44 terrorists were killed and 15 others were captured," the army statement said.

The clashes also claimed the lives of 10 Turkish soldiers, it added.

It said several rounds of ammunition and arms as well as two surface-to-air SA-7

missiles had been seized in the operation area.

The statement did not specify on which side of the border the operation had taken place, but security sources in the southeastern Turkish province of Diyarbakir said on condition of anonymity that the clashes took place in Hakurk and Haftanin regions of northern Iraq.

Meanwhile, the German-based Kurdish news agency DEM said in a statement received in Ankara that the operation had claimed the lives of 25 Turkish soldiers and three fighters of Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (PKK), which provided support to the

Turkish army.

It quoted the Kurdistan People's Liberation Army (ARGL), the PKK's armed wing, as saying that one PKK rebel was killed in clashes in Hakurk.

DEM added that some 40,000 troops had participated in the incursion, most of whom had withdrawn.

Turkish press had reported earlier in the week that some 15,000 Turkish troops, accompanied by 2,000 Kurdish village guards loyal to the state, had poured into the Kurdish-held enclave and penetrated some 15 kilometres into the region.

Turkey has carried out several incursions into northern

Iraq in its struggle with the PKK which has been fighting for Kurdish autonomy on Turkish territory since 1984. Violence connected to the conflict has claimed almost 31,000 lives.

Turkey believes that the power vacuum in northern Iraq, which has been outside Baghdad's control since the end of the 1991 Gulf War, facilitates Kurdish rebel attacks on its territory.

Baghdad denounces Turkish military operations in the area as a violation of its territorial integrity, but Turkish officials maintain that the army is obliged to use its "right to hot pursuit against PKK elements penetrating from the area."

German imprisoned in Iran expected to be released on bail

TEHRAN (AFP) — A top German envoy arrived here Saturday for talks with Iranian officials after the lawyer for a German businessman facing the death penalty said his client had been granted bail, Iranian officials said.

Chancellor Minister Bodo Hombach is scheduled to meet President Mohammad Khatami Sunday, sources from the presidential office said.

The German envoy is also due to hold talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi and First Vice President Hassan Habibi.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder appointed Hombach in November as his special envoy in the case of 57-year-old German businessman Helmut Hofer, who was sentenced to death last year for an alleged relationship with an Iranian woman, in violation of a law banning relations between Muslims and non-Muslims.

His visit comes two days after Hofer's lawyer, Hushang Ghahari, announced that a court had agreed to release his client "provisionally."

"We will pay bail on Saturday or Sunday to get him released," Ghahari said, adding that the case was finally "coming to an end."

"Tehran and Bonn are determined to break all barriers and resume an expansion of our friendly ties," Hombach told the official news agency IRNA

on his arrival at the capital's Mehrabad international airport.

"The good relations between Iran and Germany will contribute to an improvement of Iran's relations with the European Union," he said.

"I have been assigned by German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder to convey his greetings to Iranian President Mohammad Khatami and extend his official invitation to visit Germany," Hombach added.

The head of Khatami's office, Mohammad Ali Abtahi, who welcomed Hombach at the airport, said he hoped the visit would be "a major step in improving relations between Tehran and Bonn."

The German envoy's visit is being seen as a first sign of improvement in ties between Tehran and Bonn, Iran's largest European trading partner.

Hombach had been due to visit Tehran to deliver the invitation for Khatami to visit Germany late last year, but the visit was cancelled after Iranian officials reacted angrily to German calls for "greater clarity" over the Hofer case as a precondition for the visit.

Hofer has repeatedly denied having a relationship with the woman, a 26-year-old Iranian medical student identified only as Vahideh G., who was arrested at Tehran airport with him and later sentenced to 100 lashes.

Ocalan calls for 'peace measures' to end armed conflict

ANKARA (AFP) — Jailed Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan on Saturday called on Ankara to introduce measures for a "peaceful solution" to Kurdish problem to end a 15-year armed conflict between his rebels and Turkish forces.

In a statement released by his lawyers, Ocalan said such measures by the state, "including an amnesty," could form the basis to "permanently end armed clashes."

He added that the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) which he heads should "prepare itself to become legal" once Ankara "agrees to a democratic solution and guarantees Kurds' freedom of speech."

International organisations could monitor an eventual peace process between the government and the PKK.

A ceasefire the PKK proclaimed in September 1998 was still valid and should be observed by both parties, he said. Despite the ceasefire, the rebels are thought to be behind a wave of lethal bomb attacks since Ocalan's capture in February.

The 1998 offer was rejected by Turkish authorities as were two other ceasefires declared in 1993 and 1995.

Almost 31,000 people have been killed since the PKK launched an armed campaign for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey's southeastern region, which is mainly populated by

Kurds, in 1984.

Ankara, which keeps a heavy military presence in the area, regards the PKK as a "terrorist group" and refuses outright to negotiate with it.

"Ocalan told us this is a general framework that could be detailed out in the future for a lasting, democratic and peaceful solution to the Kurdish problem," Mahmoud Sakar, the lawyer who signed the statement, told AFP on the telephone.

As Ocalan's statement was being released, his rebels kidnapped a parliamentary candidate of the conservative Motherland Party along with his brother in the southeastern Anatolian province of Hakkari bordering Iran.

The Turkish media said on Saturday that Osman Dara was in his home village near the town of Yuksekova when PKK rebels, armed with hand grenades and rifles, raided his house late Friday.

The rebels fled towards Turkey's border with Iran after taking Dara, his brother Izzet, and two nephews with them.

The nephews were released before the group crossed into Iran.

Another candidate from Hakkari, Macit Firuzbeyoglu, told the NTV news channel that the rebels were aiming to prevent Motherland candidates from running in the upcoming April 18 elections.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Activists rebuild Arab house

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli peace activists and Palestinians Saturday began rebuilding for the second time a house that was twice torn down by the Israeli military in the West Bank Palestinian village of Anata. "We began the reconstruction work, and we will come back to continue it," said Yoav Hass of the Israeli Committee Against the Demolition of Houses. Israeli police watched them work without intervening, he said. A family of eight lived in the home, northeast of Jerusalem, which was destroyed by the army in July then again in August after it was rebuilt by the committee. "We will continue to rebuild the house, even if they tear it down again," owner Salim Shawarma said, adding that "there is no other solution." Israel demolishes homes that have been built without permits by Palestinians in areas of the West Bank that are under its control and has torn down 40 dwellings since the beginning of 1999.

'Iran will continue to back Palestinians'

TEHRAN (R) — Iran's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi told a visiting Palestinian official on Saturday that his country would continue to support Palestinians in their struggle against Israel. Kharazi told Farouq Qaddoumi, head of the political department of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), that Iran was determined in its support for the struggle of the Palestinian people. "Despite all pressures, [Iran] is firm in its support for the Palestinian ideal," the official Iranian news agency IRNA quoted Kharazi as saying. Iran does not recognise Israel and has condemned the Middle East peace process as a sell-out of Palestinian rights. Relations with the Palestinian National Authority were soured last year when Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei launched a vitriolic personal attack against Palestinian President Yasser Arafat for signing the U.S.-sponsored Wye Plantation accord with the Israelis.

Saudi to send dates to Kosovo refugees

RIYADH (AFP) — Saudi Arabia on Saturday said it would send 2,000 tonnes of dates to the Kosovo refugees, the official SPA news agency reported. Last week, Saudi Arabia sent two plane-loads of food, tents and blankets to the refugees and condemned "the collective punishment, the ethnic cleansing, the deportation and massacre of hundreds of thousands of Kosovo Muslims." The Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development estimates that in 1995 the six Gulf Arab states had about 50 million palm trees between them, mostly in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Iran facing worst drought in 30 years

TEHRAN (R) — Iran is facing its worst water shortage in three decades because of insufficient rainfall with the problem mainly threatening agricultural development, the official IRNA news agency reported on Saturday. Quoting Agriculture Minister Issa Kalantari, IRNA said the country was presently short of 1.2 billion cubic metres of water for farming. Kalantari urged farmers to rationalise water consumption and dig wells to make up for rainfall shortage. He said dry farming lands in the northwestern province of Ardebil, which depend on rainwater, had been completely destroyed. The minister said the Sefidroud and Aras dams in northern Iran contained only 30 to 60 per cent of their capacities. Iran's northern provinces, some of them bordering the Caspian Sea, are usually well-watered and humid, producing much of the country's wheat, rice and citrus fruits. Officials, who said the shortage was the worst in 30 years, have warned of severe shortages in Tehran for the summer months beginning in June.

'Sudan suspends talks with rebels'

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan's Islamist government has suspended peace talks with the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) over the deaths of four Sudanese captured by the SPLA, a Khartoum newspaper reported on Saturday. "Retired Major General Hassan Dhahawi, state minister at the social planning ministry, has announced the freezing of all peace talks with the rebel movement through IGAD [the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development]," the privately-owned Al Rai Al Akher daily said. The government has not formally announced it was suspending the talks and official media did not carry Dhahawi's remarks. IGAD is an east African regional grouping that has been mediating in Sudan's 16-year-old civil war. The next round of peace talks under IGAD auspices had been scheduled to take place on April 30 in the Kenyan capital Nairobi.

'Iranian cartoonist may face court for drawing'

TEHRAN (R) — A teenage cartoonist could be prosecuted in Iran for a drawing that allegedly insulted the country's Islamic laws and was in part responsible for the closing of a newspaper, reports said on Saturday.

An Islamic revolutionary court ordered the daily Zan closed on Tuesday after it had published the cartoon, as well as an Iranian new year greeting from the wife of Iran's former shah.

The court summoned editor Faezeh Hashemi, daughter of former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, and told her to bring the young cartoonist with her, or he would be formally summoned, the newspaper Neshar said.

Hashemi insisted she alone was legally responsible for her paper's contents and 17-year-old Davood Ahmadi Mounes had merely drawn what he had been told to, another daily, Khordad, reported.

The cartoon shows a thief holding a couple at gunpoint. The husband advises the gunman to shoot his wife as he would have to pay less blood money.

Under Islamic law enshrined after the 1979 revolution, relatives of a murdered woman receive only half the amount of blood money as is paid for a male victim. The money is paid in return for the family's forgiveness.

This is the second time the newspaper, which targets women and young readers, has been ordered closed. Last year, publication was suspended after a court convicted it of defaming a politician.

U.S. jets fired on, attack Iraqi air defence site

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. warplanes on Saturday attacked an Iraqi air defence site in the southern no-fly zone after being fired upon, and returned safely to their bases, a U.S. Defence Department spokesman said.

Air Force Lt. Col. Mark Samisch, a spokesman for U.S. Central Command in Tampa, Florida, which oversees U.S. forces in the Gulf, said the incident took place at about 2:30 a.m. EDT (0630 GMT) after U.S. F-16 jets were fired on by an Iraqi surface-to-air missile battery. "Coalition F-16 CG Fighting Falcons

were illuminated by Iraqi missile guidance systems and subsequently were fired upon by an Iraqi surface-to-air missile about 160 km south of Baghdad," Samisch said.

"The F-16s responded by returning fire at the radar systems and at the surface-to-air missile site. We don't have any battle damage assessment yet," he said. "The planes have all returned safely."

U.S. Navy planes on Thursday struck a missile site in southern Iraq which the United States said posed a danger to ships in the Gulf.

The United States has been policing no-fly zones in south and north Iraq since shortly after the 1991 Gulf War to protect minority groups from President Saddam's forces and avert any military threat to Iraq's neighbours. Baghdad does not recognise the zones.

A sustained campaign of air attacks by U.S. and British planes on Iraqi air defence targets in the zones began last December after the flights came under repeated ground attack.

"This is the latest of nearly 160 Iraqi provocations in the southern no-fly zone

since Operation Desert Fox," U.S. Central Command said in a statement posted on its web site.

"Coalition pilots have taken appropriate actions to defend themselves, and they will continue to defend themselves by targeting Iraq's air defence network as long as it threatens coalition planes or forces in the region."

Iraq said earlier on Saturday Western warplanes had breached its air space in the south, but air defences had forced them to return to bases in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Pilot threatened by angry passengers

MADRID (AFP) — Members of the Spanish Civil Guard were forced to board an Iberian Airlines flight here to calm outraged passengers during a three-hour take-off delay, the daily El Pais reported Saturday. The daily said passengers were furious after the pilot refused to let them off the plane during a three-hour wait for authorisation to take off. The Airbus A300 was to have left Madrid on Thursday at 8:30 p.m. (1830 GMT), headed for Las Palmas in the Canary Islands. But after waiting for two hours on the runway, the 268 passengers lost their cool. The captain was forced to barricade himself in the cockpit to escape the fury of travellers, who threatened him physically and threatened to file a complaint if he did not open the doors immediately and let them disembark. El Pais said.

You want fries with that?

NOVATO (R) — The night manager of a Marin County Burger King was arrested for allegedly using the drive-through window to sell an item definitely not on the menu — cocaine. Lt. Dennis McQuerry of the sheriff's department in Marin County, just north of San Francisco, said that Sadik Sufi was arrested after undercover officers observed drive-through drug sales taking place. "He'd put [the cocaine packet] in a cup of ice and hand it out," McQuerry said. "Some people clearly chose to get a hamburger while they were at it."

Beaver nabbed in cherry-tree felling

WASHINGTON (R) — As beavermania swept across Washington, one of a pair of elusive furry criminals munching their way through the capital's prized flowering cherry trees wound up behind bars Friday. A professional trapping service brought in by the National Park Service to nab the toothy bandits bagged its first beaver late in the evening, park officials said. The animal will be released somewhere in the wild where its tree-felling and dam-building handiwork will be less of a nuisance, they said.

Kidnappers offer apology for mistake

CALCUTTA (R) — An Indian businessman freed by kidnappers said his prayers had worked miraculously to secure his release. But it also helped that the abductors had got the wrong man. Satya Brata Ganguly, chief executive of battery maker Exide Industries, showed up at home a week after he was kidnapped. He was blindfolded and taken to "the boss," who said: "Mr. Ganguly, I am very, very sorry that we have picked up you instead of somebody else. It is our mistake. We apologise for that. I can assure you that we will not take [any money] from you or your family and I will release you." Ganguly said he was offered food and medicine and put on a train home to Calcutta.

'Dumb blonde' stereotype alive

LONDON (AFP) — The stereotype of platinum blondes as "dumb" is just as common at the end of this century as four decades ago, psychologists say. Women with blonde hair — either natural or straight from a bottle — are generally seen as having more fun and being more popular, according to tests conducted by researchers. Author Tony Cassidy and his team asked 60 men and 60 women to study head-and-shoulder shots of a 21-year-old female model wearing four different wigs depicting her as a redhead, brunette, natural blonde and platinum blonde. Using a point scale, they were asked to rate the person in the picture for intelligence, shyness, aggression, temperament and popularity. "What we found was that the platinum blonde was rated significantly less intelligent than the other three by both males and females," Cassidy said.